FORMERLY
the ALTERNATIVE:
AN AMERICAN SPECTATOR

LIBRARY
JAN 22 1979
COLLEGE

The AMERICAN SPECTATOR

Our Tenth Anniversary: Remembering the Grandeur

William F. Buckley, Jr. • ***James T. Farrell***
Hugh Kenner • ***Irving Kristol***
Theodore Levitt • ***Stephen Miller***
Malcolm Muggeridge • ***Michael Novak***
• ***R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.*** •

Vol. 11, No. 1 / November 1977 / One and a Half Dollars

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE CONTINUING CRISIS

• September, and the Carter Administration's six-foot-two-inch, 225-pound juggler vanished along with that lovely set of snowy-white angel wings heretofore borne so primly by our President. The sad losses come in the wake of another of those curious Washington rows in which the press corps, a gallimaufry of Washington pols, and various other notables become increasingly agitated about probity and high moral purpose until the whole country is made uneasily aware of another great awakening along the Potomac. Why the pols and pundits should get so exercised over matters they have done so much to obfuscate is a mystery. The spectacle of them all hollering indignantly for old-time morality is as bizarre as a congregation of faith healers bawling for national health care.

• Mr. Lance vamoosed into the Georgia back country on September 21, and a week later the pundits were still gravely sending up vapor about the Lance Affair. But what precisely did the J. Pierpont Morgan of the Calhoun First National Bank do to ignite moral rearmament in America's largest gambling casino? On this small point there is some embarrassment, for no one seems to know the gravity of Mr. Lance's wrongs. In a city devoted to such artifices as the full employment budget and our ponzi-like social security system questions of malversation rapidly lose definition. Nor is there much agreement as to what might have been gained from Mr. Lance's case other than the discovery that few things could do more violence to public trust in government than televised sessions of the U.S. Senate. There sat 17 of the Senate's most illustrious members, scowling, muttering, and issuing manifestos on the virtue of thrift and balanced budgets. It was a cartoonist's dream.

• Midway through all this grandiose bunk, Mr. Jody Powell made bold to show how suavely he had mastered the art of Bill Moyers and Ron Ziegler, when he leaked a report that Senator Charles Percy had regularly used aircraft owned by Bell & Howell much the same way as Mr. Lance had used planes of the National Bank of Georgia. Alas, too late it was discovered that Bell & Howell had no such airplanes. Soon a woebegone Mr. Powell was blubbering before the press corps about his "inappropriate, regrettable, and dumb" calumnies. The mob spared him.

• The sad news from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is that fifty-six-year-old Mr. Blain V. Mercer passed on to his reward on September 1, the victim of a heart attack. Mr. Mercer was apparently stricken while viewing "Orgy of Pain" in a private booth at the Denmark Bookstore, one of Milwaukee's most exclusive oases of adult entertainment. His body was discovered after another patron complained of unusual yelps issuing from Mr. Mercer's rented booth. It took thirty minutes to extricate him from the booth, for it was the fastidious Mr. Mercer's custom to lock his door, and he was a somewhat corpulent individual. He will be missed.

• A diapasonal sigh of relief resounded through Washington high society when one of its finest, Miss Liz Ray, reappeared in public, giving the lie to those distressing rumors filtering out of Los Angeles suggesting that she had expired. Apparently, the gifted ex-paramour of the Rt. Hon. Wayne Hays, retired, had been the object of a tasteless practical joke fabricated by a miffed boyfriend. And in Nashville, Tennessee, Miss Pat Lepley has brought a $500,000 damage suit against the Vanderbilt Hospital for refusing to complete her sex-change surgery, thus leaving her "half woman and half man, all to her detriment socially, physically, and psychologically." According to the aggrieved, the hospital is refusing to further refurbish her anatomy after already performing a hysterectomy and a mastectomy because it fears that further treatment will not be covered by medicare or medicaid. The hospital replies that Miss Lepley is unfit to be masculated. And so we leave Miss Pat Lepley, the only person in America built in conformity with HEW sex discrimination guidelines. She could have avoided all this disquiet had she but trusted in the canon of the late Mary Baker Eddy.

• In the Hudson River Psychiatric Center at Saugerties, New York, the laugh was on the grieving family of Ella Shaw as its members gathered around Mrs. Shaw's casket to pay their last respects. No sooner was the casket opened than it became clear for all to see: another false alarm. Ella was not in the casket. In her stead reposed one Laura Shaw who, like Ella, had been a patient at the Hudson River Center; but who, unlike Ella, was now quite passé. How Ella's name had gotten on Laura's casket no one knows, for the Hudson Center is a very serious place not given to practical jokes. All that can be said for sure is that members of the Shaw family will think twice before they again trudge up to Saugerties. Loyal backers of Maryland's Mr. Marvin Mandel gloried in some of the best news they have received in months when Mr. Chic Leavitt, owner of an Annapolis delicatessen, reported that Mandel's conviction for mail fraud and racketeering has had no effect whatsoever on the sales of two sandwiches named after the embattled statesman. And in Rotterdam, New York, a drink-besotted bride was charged with driving under the influence of alcohol after her car mortally bulldozed her bridegroom as they returned from their wedding reception.

• In East Haddam, Connecticut, an Episcopal priest, the Rev. Earle Fox, is suffering inexplicable persecution for the superbly Christian gesture he made at the funeral of a sixteen-year-old murder victim. Father Fox, a modern cleric whose only vice is that he believes in people, attempted to help mourners at the girl's funeral "to give up their hostilities"; he asked that they donate to a defense fund for the accused killer. Unfortunately, the response was sheer know-nothingism. Some mourners stomped out before Father Fox had even finished his gibbering. Others are calling on the local Episcopal bishop to deny Fr. Fox's First Amendment rights. Where it all will end can only be guessed, but the persecution of the poor man is a chilling reminder of how little we have progressed from the hysterical 1950s.

• In Miami, Florida, apprehensive officials of our nation's postal service are looking into charges that a postal carrier used his mail truck and the leather mail straps therein for unauthorized purposes. Police report that the carrier, Mr. Armando Bando, was laughing uproariously in the back of his truck when they spied him lynching two female dogs with his mail straps. Nearby four more female dogs were discovered, their bodies still warm. Doctors in Madrid report irregularities in that sorely pressed pacemaker recently implanted in the eighty-one-year-old president of the Spanish Communist Party, Miss Dolores Ibarruri, also called "La Pasionaria" because of her notoriously foul disposition. Miss Ibarruri has undone nearly a dozen pacemakers in the past decade! And in Holbrook, New York, a dog was killed and its master knocked unconscious when the dog relieved itself on the faulty wiring of an electrified sign.

• In Southhampton, Long Island, an aide to Vice President Mondale was arrested for "nude bathing." TV entertainer Johnny Carson has set a gang of lawyers upon poor Mr. Earl J. Braxton, the dynamic head of the Porta-John Corporation and the producer of an exquisite line of portable toilets called "Here's Johnny." And lowly Pine Bluff, Arkansas, will soon have a majestic monument commemorating the mouth of Mrs. Martha Mitchell if the town's newspaper has its way. The *Pine Bluff Commercial* has donated $1,000 to a fund-raising drive for a monument so that Pine Bluff will have a "smiling Martha Mitchell to remember and live up to."

• In Texas, police closed down a county fair exhibit billed as the "frog baby" when a worldly customer reported that the exhibit's main attraction was an eight-month-old human fetus. The exhibit's creator, Mr. Robert C. Holder, 65, was booked for abuse of a corpse. From Nairobi, Kenya, come reports that three Ugandans—the country's surviving playwright, the director of its national theater, and an official of its Ministry of Culture—were executed for participating in a play that Ugandan officials judged insulting toward His Excellency, Field Marshal Idi Amin Dada, perhaps the world's leading proponent of socialist realism. In Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, King Khalid delivered up a royal bull admonishing men who look "sissyish" and women who reveal their knees that they face "intense suffering" from the country's "religious police." And, lest we Americans chortle, bear in mind that in Ocean Beach, New York, a young man charged with eating a chocolate chip cookie in public went on trial on September 3 for violating the village's ordinance against eating in public. —*RET*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE AMERICAN SPECTATOR

5	The Struggle, Then and Now	William F. Buckley, Jr.	5
6	Looking Back on Neo-Conservatism: Notes and Reflections	Irving Kristol	6
7	Operation Death-Wish	Malcolm Muggeridge	7
10	When Academe Ran A Fever	Hugh Kenner	10
12	Vietnam and the Responsibility of Intellectuals	Stephen Miller	12
15	Why Were We In Vietnam?	Robert Asahina	15
17	McCarthyism, Still the Life of the Party	Michael Novak	17
21	Corporate Responsibility: Taking Care of Business	Theodore Levitt	21
25	"Just A Newspaper Stiff"	James Grant	25
28	Capitol Ideas	Tom Bethell	28
32	Voices for Europe (Special Book Review)	Roger Kaplan	32

Departments

2	The Continuing Crisis		2
4	Editorial / On Ten Years of Public Service	R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.	4
30	The Nation's Pulse / *Le Roi Est Mort*...	Peter J. Rusthoven	30
46	Current Wisdom	Assorted Jackasses	46

Book Reviews

35	*The New Mencken Letters*, edited by Carl Bode	James T. Farrell	35
36	*We Must March My Darlings*, by Diana Trilling	John Fox	36
40	*The Feminization of American Culture*, by Ann Douglas	Anne Crutcher	40
42	*The Cloud of Danger*, by George F. Kennan	William Kristol	42
45	*Defending America*, by Robert Conquest, et al.	Stephen Rosen	45

Publisher: Baron Von Kannon of the Saturday Evening Club; **Vice President:** Ronald E. Burr; **Managing Editor:** Steven C. Munson; **Assistant Managing Editor:** Erich Eichman; **Production Manager:** K.J. Gooderham; **Executive Secretary:** Marian Staum; **Circulation Manager:** Kevin Baker; **Subscription Manager:** Craig D. Pfeiffer; **Senior Editors:** Terry Krieger, Adam Meyerson, Karl O'Lessker; **Art Advisor:** Elliott Banfield; **Americana Editor:** Joseph P. Duggan; **Associates:** Robert Asahina, Jameson G. Campaigne, Jr., John R. Coyne, Jr., Alan Reynolds; **Contributors:** Aram Bakshian, Jr., A. Lawrence Chickering, Christopher DeMuth, Terry Eastland, Jerry Gerde, K.E. Grubbs, Jr., Anthony Harrigan, Neil Howe, William Kristol, Leslie Lenkowsky, Robert McTiernan, Judy Mathews, Rev. George Nathan, William H. Nolte, Terry O'Rourke, Marc F. Plattner, G.W. Plunkitt, Peter J. Rusthoven, Benjamin Stein, J. Whitney Stillman; **Legal Counsel:** Solitary, Poor, Nasty, Brutish & Short.

***Editor-in-Chief*: R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.**

The American Spectator *was founded in 1924 by George Nathan and Truman Newberry over a cheap domestic ale in McSorley's Old Ale House. In 1967 the Saturday Evening Club took it over, rechristening it* The Alternative: An American Spectator*; but by November 1977 the word "alternative" had acquired such an esoteric fragrance that in order to discourage unsolicited manuscripts from florists, beauticians, and other creative types the Club reverted to the magazine's original name.* The American Spectator *is now published monthly except July and September at 102 West Sixth Street, Bloomington, Indiana. Second class postage paid at Bloomington, Indiana, and additional mailing offices.*

A one-year subscription (ten issues) costs $10, outside the United States $11. All correspondence (manuscripts, subscriptions, threatening letters, federal grants, etc.) should be sent to The American Spectator, *P.O. Box 877, Bloomington, Indiana 47401; (812) 334-2715. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by self-addressed stamped envelopes.*

Microfilm editions of The American Spectator *are available from Xerox University Microfilms, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.*

Published remarkably without regard to sex, life-style, race, color, creed, or (most redundantly of all) national origin.

Copyright The American Spectator *magazine 1977. Volume 11, Number 1, November 1977.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

On Ten Years of Public Service

R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

This journal is now ten years old. Mencken believed that ten years was quite long enough at one job, so last month I quit *The Alternative* and moved on to *The American Spectator*. I have the same address, the same associates, and the same bartender as before—so much for change or personal growth as the modern educationists say. Most fledgling editors auspicate their journals after a brassy overture of blood-curdling declamations against the establishment aired *pari passu* with dozens of fruitful visits to Chase Manhattan and other citadels of the capitalist tyranny. With the wampum they extract they hire a gang of Madison Avenue smoothies and a stable of aging litterateurs whose cheeky reputations and Martha's Vineyard villas rest securely on their published lamentations over American philistinism and general ghastliness. The more prosperous of them eschew lamentation and resort to outright threats. This is not the way we did it at *The Alternative*.

When we founded *The Alternative* we had only a couple thousand dollars in the bank, and I was furiously pasting down galleys in the summer cottage of a friend while he held off his enraged parents and their eviction notice. They claimed that my two-day unexpected visit to their summer retreat had lasted long enough. We countered that it took time and care to put out a magazine and that we could not be troubled by the imminent arrival of house guests, a forest fire, pestilence, or whatever it was that they threatened us with. The magazine was sent to the printer only after the job was completed. I never saw my friend's parents again, nor have I ever had to seek honest employment. The Fates had fetched me to one of the oldest professions known to man. I was to be a hot-air monger and procurer of same.

Behind us lies a decade of voluptuous joy, for which I am profoundly indebted to thousands of discriminating readers and hundreds of independent-minded writers. What is more, I should like to express my gratitude to those great Americans who have studiously and triumphantly ignored us: eminences of the sixties such as Mr. Clark Kerr; timeless figures like Senator George S. McGovern, Miss Jane Fonda, and less celebrated believers in the Big Foot mystery. Their contributions to our success have been positively selfless, and what a low ingrate I would be not to confess my thanks. Further, I should like to express thanks to the indefatigable efforts over the years of the Chicago Seven, the Students for a Democratic Society, the editors of the *New York Review of Books*, dozens of very intellectual mass murderers, bombers, arsonists, and political reformers, plus the vast majority of the United States Senate. Of course the House of Representatives is not to be forgotten nor is the Supreme Court, the American Association of University Professors, and other allied subterfuges. I should very much like to throw in the International Association of Poets, Playwrights, Editors, Essayists, and Novelists, and the Chamber of Commerce; but perhaps I wax extravagant. Let me merely go on to testify to the farcical accomplishments of most Third World statesmen, especially those plying their trade in Africa and Latin America.

Finally, I am duty-bound to pay an especial tribute to that gifted and assiduous cast of disparate souls who for month upon month turned our lives into a saturnalia of excitement and mystery. I have in mind, naturally, the heroes, the villains, and the supporting cast of Watergate, the most fabulous tale since the Old Testament. It is a difficult question who provided more sheer rapture—the White House junto, or the fearless defenders of the Constitution. Until recently I would have given the nod to my brethren in the press box whose markedly contrived estimates of their own worth made such exquisite reading, but increasingly I am aware of another character of comic dimension, the Nixon maniac: that weird character who flushes with wrath or mellows with eulogies at the merest mention of our fallen leader. Apparently, Mr. Nixon has induced these queer and contradictory feelings for years, but I gather ineffable satisfaction from the growing realization that I will have these eccentrics with me for the rest of my life. Imagine, whenever I am at the cocktail party of, say, some university professors, and the conversation is sepulchered in flummeries about the contemporary white man's burden, all I need do to set off an amusing conflagration is to intone something like, "Well, you'll have to admit that we'd never be in this mess if Mr. Nixon were still President."

A Life of Good Works

Of course, launching opinions was one of the chief reasons for our founding; that, and a profound dedication to a life of good works. There is much earnest talk today about the marvelous diversity of opinion flourishing in the Republic, but the facts put the guffaw on such persiflage. I doubt American history has ever witnessed a period less congenial to unfettered thought, save during time of war. I say this despite what I now hear of the fifties: a decade whose horrors make the skin crawl and the blood boil. Today's enemies of free thought are not the *populo minuto*; rather, they are the very people who recently were freedom's champions, the intellectuals. This is not to say the Republic lacks piquant ideas; we are blighted with them. Unfortunately, their piquancy issues from their lunacy. The sad truth is that any writer who makes bold to say as much hazards calumny, loss of income, banishment from the campus Chatauqua circuit, and worse. Admittedly, *The Alternative* has never assumed this supine posture, but then what did we have to lose?

Today we are full of saucy vigor, and students of the *genus intelligentsia* regularly express astonishment that a small journal whose editorial offices are far from the publishing purlieus can actually turn out interesting stuff. Doubtless some of this astonishment would abate if they were informed that Indiana is now served by an excellent telephone company, and has even gained access to the modern aeroplane—jets. But a fuller explanation for our vitality is that it reflects the vitality existing outside the citadels of reigning orthodoxy: the journals, the foundations, the think tanks, and the universities, still dominated by the egalitarian whim-wham and the self-realization hoax. When writers realize that they can express intelligent ideas without paying obeisance to the conventional claptrap, they write more robustly and think more carefully. Our pages are lively because our writers work with full confidence that they are free to speak their minds. True, we do patrol our printed fields for grammatical weeds; but never do we heave out a manuscript for its dangerous ideas, unless those ideas are anti-democratic or downright foolish. Consequently, we publish libertarians, conservatives, neo-conservatives, even liberals; radicals need not apply.

I know from personal experience that our encouragement of free expression is impossible for most so-called liberals to understand. Often the liberal brethren ask me to do a no-holds-barred piece for one of their renowned pages. Always I am doubtful that they really know what they are getting into. And usually my doubts are sustained when my erstwhile devil-may-care editor hunkers back—much chastened—to offer up some dubious excuse for rejection. Occasionally, he flattens me by claiming that I failed to write in the style he is accustomed to in *The Alternative*.

I take such episodes as evidence of the censorship now practiced in America, a

(*continued on page 44*)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

William F. Buckley, Jr.

The Struggle, Then and Now

George Nash has done the best that could be done to chronicle the development of a movement. Several times in his book (*The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945*) he stresses that it is a *movement* he is talking about, and then, drawing copiously on his gifts for summary and contraction, he tells us what went into the mix: quite a gallimaufry, including economic distillations inspired by the Alpine air at Mont Pelerin, a prayerful reexamination of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, searching questions about the responsibility of Socrates for his own elimination, the revival of the great tradition by Leo Strauss, empirical studies of the work of regulatory commissions, high colonic examinations of the internal cancer of the West, lyrical tributes to the good life as, for instance, by Richard Weaver, swashbuckling marches through the tortured ranks of our stuttering social scientists, the reassertion of form and the rejection of formalism by T.S. Eliot: all of this happened, and suddenly—little by little—we felt that there was—a brotherhood. Not quite so cohesive as that which grew up in response to the excesses of Orwell's Big Brother, nor one whose members were bound to each other as men and women are bound who knew Gulag. But something of a brotherhood, and that is one of the principal differences between the struggle, then and now.

There was, even before *The American Spectator* was founded, way back in 1950 a "conservative" alliance. It was a legacy of inertial ideology from turn-of-the-century America. It was lubricated by profitable—and exploitative—relations—between business and its clients, between farmers and the state, between whites and racial supremacy. It had a certain sense of obligation to the old virtues, but it was, as we think back on it, highly unexplicated. The reasons for encouraging a private sector were wonderfully well known and advertised in the same classics to which we continue now to defer. But the new wave—a kind of secular modernism—was sweeping it all away, mostly in the classrooms of America, where the struggle was seen if not exactly in Marxist terms (Marxist rigor was never appealing to Americans at large), at least in neo-Marxist terms—the catalyst of my book, *God and Man at Yale*. Conservatives had a quintessential representative: Senator Robert A. Taft, whose strength derived from his integrity, his nimble (if less than profound) mind; and a considerable political agility. There was formal and even spontaneous enthusiasm for Senator Taft, even among young people: but never any sense of romance. Probably because conservatism was thought of, even by its friends, as something of a desiccated competitor in lusty ideological wars that had dominated the century: lacking in system, unlike fascism; in eschatology, unlike Communism; and in idealistic passion, unlike liberalism. Back in those days Whittaker Chambers wrote to me to warn that the hordes would not be stopped by fresh transcripts by Russell Kirk of the vaticinations of Edmund Burke.

There is no reason to suppose that the hordes will be stopped now, but every reason to suppose that the forces that stop them, if ever they mobilize to do so, will have been touched by that unbought grace of which the exegetes of Burke have reminded us. Could it be that the distinctive difference in the struggle, then and now, is that in the interim it has acquired grace? Is it not *grace*—most spectacularly celebrated in the final episode of Malraux's *La Condition Humaine*, when the older of the condemned men passes out his suicide pill to his two younger, frailer associates—that is the distinctive attribute of the movement now, as compared to then? In those days there was *1984*, but it was fantasy. Today, we have the *Gulag Archipelago*, and *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*; and *First Circle*—and by them we are annealed into a brotherhood, with a sense of mission marked by that grace which reminds us that, ultimately, we owe each other everything—even our private resources of self-destruction, of release. To read these books is to undergo a sacramental experience. I feel differently in the company of men who have read Solzhenitsyn. Solzhenitsyn was the solvent. He vested all that came before, all that George Nash wrote about, with a kind of unity which defined the struggle, even if it did not make self-evident the means of pursuing it.

On the tenth anniversary of this journal there are grounds for rejoicing. It is a journal of joy, reminding us in every issue of the reasons to celebrate the zest of combat, the joy of righthinking, the pleasure of language. I join this happy company in paying tribute to you. □

William F. Buckley, Jr. is founder and editor of National Review.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Irving Kristol

Looking Back on Neo-Conservatism: Notes and Reflections

According to Daniel P. Moynihan, who has a scholar's attentiveness to such things, it was Michael Harrington who first used the term "neo-conservatism," some half-dozen years ago. It goes without saying that the term was meant pejoratively and invidiously, representing an effort to read some people out of the liberal community, which is also where the intellectual subcommunity happens to be located. It had the connotation of "renegade liberal," and so long as "neo-conservative" was embraced by quotation marks—in *Time, Newsweek*, etc.—that connotation lingered. But those quotation marks have gradually disappeared. Neo-conservatism today is an intellectual and political tendency in its own right, no longer merely a reaction against a dominant liberalism that seemed sterile and increasingly ineffectual. As a matter of fact—and for some of us it is a pleasing irony—more and more people these days are putting the word "liberal" in quotation marks, which is a way of putting the category itself into question.

It is true, of course, that the neo-conservative impulse did in fact arise out of dissatisfaction by liberals with the prevailing liberal ideology, which we may call the ideology of social democracy. That is always the way new intellectual-political impulses arise—by people learning from experience and changing their minds. There are no virgin births in political thought. No immaculate conceptions, either.

Neo-conservatism in this country was quickened into being by the evident or utterly predictable failure of the Great Society programs of Lyndon Johnson's administration. But it wasn't just that. Somewhere below the surface there was—there must have been—a growing uneasiness about the future of conventional social democracy, and of conventional social-democratic reforms, in the twentieth century. A grand reformation, in whose spirit those now called neo-conservatives had originally been nourished, was turning sour. The world since 1945 had gradually been transforming itself along the lines prescribed by the social-democratic vision. But without the anticipated consequences. Political orders were becoming less stable, not more so. Social tensions were increasing rather than decreasing. And neo-Keynesian economic policy—the economic basis for social-democratic politics—began to promote a crippling inflation.

Another political god was all set to fail.

Perhaps the most disillusioning experience of all, for those who were to move in a neo-conservative direction, was the youth rebellion of the 60s, and the counterculture associated with it.

The important thing to remember is that this rebellion was not primarily directed against conservative, old-fashioned, capitalist America, though it sometimes talked that way. The original cadres of this rebellion were recruited from the sons and daughters of liberal parents. They had been born into "enlightened" upper-middle-class homes, raised in chic upper-middle-class suburbs, educated in "progressive" upper-middle-class schools. It was this world and its values that they found so suffocating, so empty of meaning. It was not, for the most part, conservative professors who were heckled and harassed on campus—it was the "liberal" professors, surrogates for liberal parents. As one student put it, when asked to explain the reasons for his radicalism: "You don't know what hell is like unless you were raised in Scarsdale." These young people had seen the future promised by their liberal parents and were repelled by it. Moreover, encouraged by their "permissive" and "broad-minded" parents to be "creative" in all their attitudes and social relations, they promptly engaged in a "creative" repudiation of, not only traditional America, but liberal America as well (or even most especially).

Later on, to be sure, the rebellious counterculture, as it gathered momentum, swept up all kinds of young people into "the movement." But the leadership and the ethos remained that of the sullen and discontented children of the liberal upper-middle class.

All of this led those of us who were becoming skeptical of social-democratic programs and policies, on the grounds that they seemed not to be working as expected, to broaden the grounds of our disaffection. If one is merely critical of liberal policies, but accepting of the political metaphysics which generated these policies, the term "neo-liberal" would have been more appropriate than "neo-conservative." Indeed, early on in the 1960s many of us did rather think of ourselves as "neo-liberals" or "revisionist liberals"—and, it must be said, some still do. It was our disengagement from *cultural* liberalism that led to something that could fairly be called "neo-conservatism."

After all, a large segment of the liberal population—including many liberal politicians—has by now become skeptical of liberal programs, but nevertheless retains its liberal identity. What is sometimes called "pragmatic liberalism" (and can more accurately be called half-disillusioned liberalism) is a step toward neo-conservatism, but on its own it never really gets there. It is the cultural dimension—one's basic attitude toward traditional values as distinct from the inchoate "progressive" values of "self-liberation"—that is crucial. A politician or a social critic will not usually find himself tagged as any kind of "conservative" merely because he is erratic in his loyalty to particular social-democratic policies that are being urged upon government. But if he starts taking an appreciative stance toward church and family, while indicating a strong dislike of pornography and homosexuality—that, in itself, will usually be enough. In truth, the cultural infrastructure of modern liberalism is so sensitive that, if he does nothing more than come out in favor of capital punishment, that alone will make the media and the academic community tongue-tied when it comes to calling him a liberal.

So an explanation of the neo-conservative impulse is not really hard to put forward. The interesting question is: why neo-conservative rather than simply conservative? What is new about this conservatism which constrains it to distinguish itself from the various conservatisms of yesteryear?

I think there are two important differences, one in the area of social policy, the other in the area of political philosophy.

Neo-conservatism, unlike the kind of liberal individualism—

Irving Kristol is co-editor of The Public Interest, *a member of the* Wall Street Journal*'s board of contributors, and senior fellow of the American Enterprise Institute.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

centered in the business community—that social democracy has taken for its enemy, is not opposed *in principle* to the welfare state. It is anti-socialist, of course, and anti-state-capitalist too. But it is not upset by the fact that, in a populous, complex, and affluent society, people may prefer to purchase certain goods and services collectively rather than individually. It is therefore relatively untroubled by group old-age insurance (i.e., social security), group unemployment insurance, group medical insurance (i.e., medicare and medicaid)—or even collective charity (i.e., welfare). People will always want security as much as they want liberty, and the 19th-century liberal-individualist notion that life for all of us should be an enterprise at continual risk is a doctrinaire fantasy. It can fairly be described as an *anti-political* theory, in that all human relations are coerced into a model of economic activity. That model has its uses, but its presuppositions are such as to make it inadequate, by way of description or prescription, for a political community.

A welfare state, properly conceived, can be an integral part of a conservative society. Indeed, one of the frustrations of social democracy is that so many of its initial reforms, once established, serve as bulwarks against a further socialist transformation. Which is why the left-wing factions of all social-democratic parties are expressing an increasing dissatisfaction with a "mere" welfare state.

In political philosophy, the dominant influence has been the late Professor Leo Strauss, who—together with his students—has shown how it is possible to understand and support the modern liberal order while having a detached intellectual perspective on it. Neo-conservatism appreciates the criticisms of this order by such conservative cultural analysts as T.S. Eliot or Russell Kirk, or even by such radical cultural critics as Herbert Marcuse and Jean-Paul Sartre, who do call our attention to elements that are lacking in modernity for a truly humane life. But it rejects the romanticism inherent in the yearnings for a more "organic" order, just as it rejects any need to glorify a predominantly free-enterprise economy as being, always and everywhere, the best of all possible worlds.

The major intellectual effort of neo-conservatism is to de-utopianize political thinking. There is substance to practically every criticism that has been made, on the left or right, of modern democratic capitalism. But all this means is that our society, like every other, has its inherent costs as well as its obvious benefits. It is certainly not the best of all possible worlds—but the evidence of the twentieth century is quite conclusive that it is the best of all *available* worlds. That makes it very much worth defending.

The neo-conservative cast of mind, in short, is—or should be—more philosophical than ideological. This may well be the most important thing about it. For the past two centuries most of our political thinking has been ideological—i.e., dominated by utopian visions of social and human perfection. Neo-conservatism says that such visions may have their pedagogic or speculative uses, but that the real world should be treated with that kind of due respect we call prudence—which is, in turn, the cardinal virtue of statesmanship.

And if such a modest conception of politics fails to excite one's sensibilities—well, one can always retire to one's library and read a book. Politics has to do with practical virtue, not with the regeneration of humanity by passionate commitment to any sovereign ideal. □

Malcolm Muggeridge

Operation Death-Wish

It would appear the liberal mind is possessed with a passion to abolish freedom in the name of freedom, involving the many in the death wish of the few.

At the beginning of the seventies I wrote an article entitled "The Decade of the Great Liberal Death-Wish." It appeared in *Esquire* magazine, then edited by Harold Hayes, and attracted a certain amount of attention, being reprinted in various periodicals, including, surprisingly, the Soviet magazine, *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, along with an explanatory, and by no means wholly critical, commentary. The theme is one that has haunted me ever since, as a young journalist in Moscow in the early thirties, I observed the truly extraordinary antics there of visiting intelligentsia from Western Europe and the United States. Almost all of them displayed a credulity about the regime, and about what they heard from its professional apologists, that would have shaken an African witch doctor. Notable examples were Bernard Shaw, the Webbs, André Gide, Lincoln Steffans, Julian Huxley, Henri Barbusse, and Harold Laski. The performance of visiting clergymen was particularly striking; there was nothing, it seemed, they liked better than being shown round the anti-God museums, and, though mostly ardent pacifists at home, they heard with delight the roar of Soviet war planes overhead and the rattle of Soviet tanks across the Red Square. I had been brought up to regard these western intelligentsia as the chosen elite, the Samurai of our time, and there they were adulating to an extravagant degree the most ruthless and comprehensive dictatorship the world has yet seen. What was I to make of it? If the Pope had suddenly issued an encyclical in favor of wife-swapping, or Dr. Spock had come out strongly for birching in schools, I could not have been more surprised and shocked.

I brooded long on this strange phenomenon, constantly expecting that some new instance of Soviet perfidy and resort to terrorism would produce a change of heart in the regime's liberal admirers. For instance, the Purges, when all the old Bolsheviks, the men who had made the Revolution, the USSR's founding fathers, were first humiliated publicly and then executed, on Stalin's orders. Again, the Nazi-Soviet Pact, the betrayal over the occupation of Eastern and Central Europe after the 1939-45 war, the suppression of the Hungarian, East German, and Polish risings, and the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Red Army, not to mention Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin at the twentieth Party Congress, and the subsequent posthumous dethronement of the most adulated and wiliest of all the Soviet leaders. In each case, after some momentary disconcertment and protest, the old

Malcolm Muggeridge is the author of many books on Christianity, including Jesus: The Man Who Lives *and* Something Beautiful for God. *He has published two volumes of his memoirs,* Chronicles of Wasted Time, *and is presently writing the third.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

spirit of acquiescence and adulation resumed its sway; as the late A.T. Cholerton, the most brilliant and perceptive British correspondent ever to be stationed in the USSR, put it, the vomit returned to the dog. Finally, I was forced to conclude that this attitude of western liberals to the Soviet regime was not so much a delusion as an addiction, signifying in them a death-wish, a built-in passion to destroy everything and everyone they purported to hold dear, with a view to ultimately abolishing themselves.

The same point is made with superb artistry and insight by Dostoevsky in his novel *The Devils* (in its first English translation, by Constance Garnett, called *The Possessed*; itself a sort of liberal gloss, demonic possession being commonly regarded as less pernicious than actual diabolism), which portrays a group of quasi-revolutionaries and the havoc they make with no other purpose than to create disorder and stir up violence. Their leader, Peter Verkhovensky, gives them the order-of-the-day: "A generation or two of debauchery, followed by a little drop of nice fresh blood, and then the turmoil will begin." It is only necessary to look round the world today to realize how thoroughly this program has been carried out, and how infallibly the predicted turmoil has come about and is continuing. Dostoevsky, too, brilliantly shows how the nihilism of Peter Verkhovensky derives directly from the sentimental liberalism of his father, Stepan Trofimovich Verkhovensky —a superbly drawn farcical character; as it might be, a male impersonation of Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. It would seem to be the case that liberal genes automatically breed revolutionary ideologues and activists. After all, Donald Maclean, who operated as a Soviet spy in the British Foreign Office, and then defected to the USSR, is the son of an eminent liberal politician; while Labour Party firebrands like Michael Foot and Tony Benn were sired and reared in sentimental liberalism, and the *Guardian*, an emanation of the liberal mind if ever there was one, has long been a favorite shop-window for Marxist and other revolutionary bric-a-brac.

In my *Esquire* article I attempted to trace something of the part the great liberal death-wish is playing in the decline and impending fall of what we continue to call western civilization. As the decade of the seventies draws to a close, the forces of demolition can be seen to be advancing at an accelerating rate on all fronts; in view of their liberal orientation, ostensibly representing progress rather than regress, compassion rather than brutal necessity, liberation rather than oppression, freedom rather than servitude. Thus, a process of what amounts to creeping revolution is seen as a mighty leap forward in the quest for a kingdom of heaven on earth, and Christendom's setting sun is taken to be a new dawn breaking. I venture to quote the concluding words of my article:

> As the astronauts soar into the vast eternities of space, on earth the garbage piles higher; as the groves of academe extend their domain, their alumni's arms reach lower; as the phallic cult spreads, so does impotence. In great wealth, great poverty; in health, sickness; in numbers, deception. Gorging, left hungry; sedated, left restless; telling all, hiding all; in flesh united, forever separate. So we press on along the valley of abundance that leads to the wasteland of satiety, passing on our way through the gardens of fantasy; seeking happiness ever more ardently, and finding despair ever more surely.

It would seem to me abundantly clear that the feature of our time that will strike posterity most forcefully will be precisely this bizarre working out of a death-wish in terms of utopianism. They will note that the more money spent on schools and colleges, the more illiteracy increased; the higher the hopes placed in education as a civilizing and enlightening influence, the more evident was the reversion to barbarism, as exemplified in hooliganism of one sort or another—baby and wife-battering, vandalism, muggings, rape, and the like. More ostensibly humane attitudes to crime and criminals resulted in sharp increases year by year in crimes of violence, especially by juveniles of both sexes; as easier procedures for divorce led to the break-up of ever more marriages and homes, and the legalization of abortion to a positive holocaust of unborn babies—in England over a million in three years, which is more deaths than in the 1914-18 war.

Will it not, then, appear as though, woven into the history of our time, was a principle of *reductio ad absurdum*, whereby the liberal mind, pursuing its utopian fantasies, managed to frustrate the very purposes to which it was ostensibly dedicated? What, for instance, could more effectively discredit the liberal notion of substituting the conference table for traditional diplomacy and the battlefield than, first, the League of Nations, and then its successor, the United Nations—two towers of Babel whose deliberations have created even more confusion than already existed, and whose directives have succeeded in multiplying confrontations and intensified conflicts in a world given over to strife? Again, who has more effectively exposed the absurdities, contradictions, and inherent weaknesses of capitalism than its sometime reputed savior, John Maynard Keynes? Or who the fatuities and monstrosities of Communism more relentlessly than its foremost twentieth-century exponent, Joseph Stalin? Has not the very word "welfare" come to stink to high heaven in light of the consequences of its elevation into a way of life, as writing the pursuit of happiness into the American Declaration of Independence has vilified the very notion of being happy, luring many pursuers of happiness into cul-de-sacs like drug-addiction, and sending them aimlessly about the world, bearded, tousled, and hopeless?

These are all symptoms, however; the basic cause, I have come to believe, of the phenomenon of the great liberal death-wish is simply that western man has grown weary of the struggle to be free. He has come to find the burden of the freedom he inherited from the past centuries of Christendom, insupportable; his freedom is too much for him, and he wants to shed it. As Leslie Fiedler has put it: There is "a weariness in the West which undercuts the struggle between socialism and capitalism, democracy and autocracy; a weariness with humanism itself which underlines all the movements of our world, a weariness with the striving to be men."* In other words, the liberal mind, it would appear, is possessed with a passion to abolish freedom in the name of freedom. Prometheus who stole the fire of the gods to make himself free was punished by being bound to a rock, and each day having his entrails gouged out by ravening birds of prey; western man seeking to shed his freedom has arranged his own punishment, binding himself to a rock, and daily feeding on his own entrails and calling it liberation. In the great scene in *The Brothers Karamazov* when the Grand Inquisitor and the returned Christ confront one another in Seville, the Grand Inquisitor speaks for all liberal minds when he explains to the returned Christ that He cannot be permitted to stay because, if He did, He would once again, as He had before, offer mankind His dreadful gift of freedom. It has taken the Inquisition, the Grand Inquisitor explains, much toil and trouble to undo the disastrous consequences of this misguided offer, and they just can't risk having all the work to do again, which is what Christ's continuing presence in Seville would necessarily involve.

Subsequently, there came a time when the Inquisition no longer sufficed to achieve the Grand Inquisitor's purpose, and it was of this need for a substitute that the great liberal death-wish was born. Where the Inquisition disposed only of crude instruments like the thumbscrew and the rack to enforce orthodoxy, and the fear of excommunication to sustain it, other more subtle means of persuasion have been developed, reaching in the twentieth century a high degree of effectiveness. For instance, the ingenious device has been adopted of preaching anarchy to promote servitude, of acclaiming eros to spread impotence, of announcing the imminent withering away of the State—Hobbes' Great Leviathan—to extend and enhance its power, thereby preparing the way for authoritarian government of one sort or another, it matters little, in Grand Inquisitor terms, under whose auspices and what the precise ideology may be.

To produce the maximum effect with such devices, however, a *voice* was needed; a Pied Piper to lead the way to the rainbow's end, where, instead of a crock of gold, there turns out to be a Gulag Archipelago. Now the voice has been found, coming out of a microphone; the Pied Piper in living color beckons us on from a television screen, and lo! the media have taken over from the

---

* Quoted by Duncan Williams in *Trousered Apes* from Fiedler's *Waiting for the End*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Grand Inquisitor. In the media the great liberal death-wish realizes its perfect fulfillment; in the TV gurus, charismatic, verbose, sincere, its perfect spokesmen. With a little help from makeup, lighting, and an autocue, who better equipped than they to denounce an unjust war and bring it to an ignominious and disastrous end, to unseat a President and jeopardize the institution of the Presidency, to unmask the CIA and dismantle the whole intelligence setup of which it is an integral part? Imagine subversive conspirators operating underground, well provided with money and weapons, well entrenched altogether—could they have hoped to do a thousandth part as well as this Operation Death-Wish, mounted and carried out, not by alien enemies or domestic traitors, but by the pampered, favorite sons of the very institutions and interests whose downfall they promote? Jericho's walls were brought down by a trumpet-blast from without its gates; the trumpet-blast which brings our walls tumbling down sounds from within. Our western civilization is the first in all history to breed and indoctrinate its own destroyers, educating at the public expense the barbarians who will overthrow it, brainwashing its citizens to expect and even welcome its downfall; silencing all warning voices, scorning the faith that might yet avert catastrophe. In short, involving the many in the death-wish of the few.

When I was working in Moscow all those years ago I had an extraordinarily strong conviction, amounting to a kind of mystical certainty, that what was happening there was, in essentials, bound to come to pass everywhere else. This did not signify a triumphant proletarian revolution sweeping through the world in accordance with the Marxist prophesies. Nor did it mean the acceptance elsewhere of the ideology and system of government in the USSR as then existing; still less, the final realization of the Slavophile dreams of conquest that the Soviet regime under Stalin took over from its Tzarist predecessor. Rather, it meant that I was seeing in Moscow the shape of things to come, in the sense that western man was fated to fall into a collectivist way of life such as existed in the USSR as a result of the Russian Revolution; and this quite irrespective of whatever might happen to him historically, however inimical to such an outcome might be the principles he ostensibly adhered to, and however furiously and valiantly he might struggle in an opposite direction.

Moscow in 1932, that is to say, was a preview of the life-style of the future—collectivized in every sense of the word, with an imposed comprehensive orthodoxy relentlessly enforced. As in a vision, I saw in London, in Paris, in New York, in all the cities of the West, the same sort of crowds drifting along the same streets as I had seen in Moscow, Leningrad, and Kiev; looking in the same sort of way into shop-windows and newspapers, echoing the same sort of slogans masquerading as thoughts and opinions, crowding onto the same sort of buses and trains, and infesting the same sort of beaches, parks of culture and rest, and places of entertainment —Broadway, Piccadilly, the Champs Élysées scarcely distinguishable from the Nevsky Prospect, the Arbaat, the Red Square.

The role of the great liberal death-wish in bringing about this collectivist consummation will be, I am confident, seen historically as decisive. Here, a comparison may be made with the troubled former inmate of a criminal insane asylum released on parole who finds himself longing nostalgically for the peace, the seclusion, the silence of a padded cell; for the key turning in the lock which not only shut him in, but also shut everyone and everything else out; for the harsh commands of the jailor and the inflexible prison rules against which there was no appeal. As the plain van comes to fetch him, screaming to be free, he yearns for confinement. Similarly, the liberal mind, screaming for democracy, yearns for a one-party authoritarian state, in darkest Africa if not yet in twilight Britain. As I write these words, Mr. Andrew Young, the United States Ambassador to the United Nations, and Dr. Owen, the British Foreign Secretary, are away on their African travels with a view to furthering the setting up in the Union of South Africa and Rhodesia of black majority rule based on universal suffrage and parliamentary democracy—a system of government not to be found anywhere on the African continent, least of all in the former British colonies or in the recently *soi disant* liberated Portuguese ones. Messrs. Young's and Owen's journeyings irresistibly recall those of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, likewise directed towards liberating the enslaved and delivering the oppressed. Nor would it surprise me if they met with similar adventures to those which befell the Knight and his Squire. I am thinking particularly of the occasion when they set free a chain of galley slaves who, the moment they were liberated, set themselves to hurling stones at their liberators.

The great liberal death-wish, then, may be seen as a kind of do-it-yourself collectivization kit enabling us to enslave ourselves rather than be enslaved; sleepwalking into our own Gulag, incarcerating ourselves in our own high-rise prisons, murdering our own innocents before they are born and planning our own families out of existence, making ourselves sick by swallowing our own drugs and impotent by wallowing in our own porn, reducing ourselves to penury by printing ever more of our own currency, poisoning ourselves with our own pollution, and believing our own lies fed to us by our own media. Romantics believe that the outcome will be a great, glorious nuclear bang, a fireworks display in our own corner of the stratosphere, and then curtains. Realists, on the other hand, foresee the coming to pass of a socio-biological Garden of Eden to which Adam and Eve have been readmitted by spewing up the apple giving them knowledge of good and evil, attaining thereby a second innocence with no real choices to be made; only the inexorable working out of a predetermined genetic destiny. I know, however, that in either case, whether the nuclear fireworks or the socio-biological bliss, in some remote forgotten place a naked savage, all unaware of such apocalyptic developments, will feel impelled to daub a stone with colored mud and prostrate himself before it in an act of worship, somehow aware in his dim brain and simple heart that he exists only as a participant in the purposes of a Godhead requiring to be worshipped and adored. And in that act, yet another chapter will begin in the unfolding drama of our human destiny, with time reaching up to eternity and eternity stooping down to time, making Now Always and Always Now. Once more the Word will become flesh, and dwell among us full of grace and truth. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hugh Kenner

When Academe Ran A Fever

Out of the sixties emerged the Knowledge Factory, subdividing human curiosity into projects, breeding grants and white mice.

Ike, "driven to the edge, almost, of a thought," the Keystone Caesar and our last funny president—bliss was it in that fog to be alive, when our only pollution problem was his syntax and after each press conference thoughtful men with push brooms swept the floor clean of disjunctive grunts, still-born modifiers, participial turds.

The question was whether meetings between the two defense ministers might bring about something I said and of course it well might because what you are constantly testing is statements and then the extent to which those statements are trustworthy carried out and supported by deeds and actions that are provable now as I say at one time I repeat Marshall Zhukov and I operated together very closely I couldn't see any harm coming from a meeting between the two defense ministers if that could be arranged. *—verbatim, unpunctuatable*

It was masterly, the West Point or Adversary model of language, the asker as enemy to be ever so amiably enfiladed, sudden dummy troops behind every machicolation (hurrah! a shambles), popguns left right and beyond, the *New York Times* man (his pencil snapped) sitting back routed while the general rode off in all directions. What did he say? He didn't say.

And yet, though that was his scenario, Ike conducted it with a sinister up-to-dateness, as though commanding, decades ahead of schedule, the technology of the neutron bomb. His face bespoke popguns, his eyes twinkled with *Beau Geste* romance, but his lips moved through rituals of irradiation, sprayed neutering beams of unmeaning. That was unsettling. A clown is one thing, an insidious disease quite another.

Somewhere overhead Sputnik wheeled. In October '57—all of twenty years ago now—Lox had flamed white and soil near the Urals rumbled as a sphere with antennae poking out of it was thrust into orbit. (Why didn't it fall down? It was fun to picture Ike's brow furrowing as Wernher von Braun tried to explain.) The Russki owned captive Germans, that much was clear.

Almost immediately a bigger Sputnik went up, cylindrical, with a dog in it named Laika. Laika died as per plan when the oxygen ran out, and from their sinking island in the North Sea overtaxed Britons shrieked indignation. Show me a man, sir, who mistreats a dog and I shall show you a *cad*. Khrushchev's grin displayed little peg-teeth, hippo-teeth.

Laika's cold tomb re-entered the air, turned fiery; "re-entry" was a sudden vogue word. At Cape Canaveral *our* Germans rushed onto the pad a grapefruit-sized satellite atop a Viking rocket; not big, but, you see, superior technology. It fell over the instant Mission Control lit the match: "IKE'S SPUTNIK FLOPNIK." For a while nothing Western seemed to get off the ground. As bonfires glowed round the base of a cartoonist's Washington Monument, the wino in the foreground confided, "It'll never get off the ground."

Hugh Kenner is Andrew W. Mellon Professor of the Humanities at Johns Hopkins University. His latest book is Geodesic Math and How to Use It.

What got off the ground, hoisting man moonwards with it, was the knowledge industry, Clark Kerr its theologian by default. Clark Kerr was Ike reconstituted in hyperspace. His bald dome shielded a memory bank. Once the sensors behind his rimless glasses had locked on your face, then if you were one of the University of California's tens of thousands of employees his circuitry matched you instantly to the right name. He carried home paperwork in grocery cartons. Late at night, while seals barked offshore, he marked memoranda with his tiny green script, for action or inaction. (The top man's powers of inaction are formidable. No one understood that better.) He was top man in a new kind of fief, the Knowledge Factory. Growth was its watchword. It was, among other things, the world's largest breeder of white mice: a Multiversity.

Four paws per mouse, a lot of paws; still by writing Washington it wouldn't have been impossible to finance booties for all of them. Mice were Science, and Science was the West's Response to the Challenge of Sputnik. (Arnold Toynbee, Mr. Challenge-and-Response, was still around, more bewildered than he let on.) At the University of Virginia a white rodent named Robert E. Lee ran mazes faster than any rodent known: faster, surely, even, than any conditioned by Pavlov, the Master Conditioner. Hurrah for a free society! Washington's checks totalled millions, millions.

Hybrids of old sciences, notably biochemistry, altered all lab curricula. Biochemists' offices acquired air-conditioning, and papers were no longer baled in grocery cartons. Lockable filing cases paid for by grants housed the grant applications, drawer on drawer. Savvy administrators threatened the scalps of mere scholars who weren't drafting proposals. The sap of growth ran through questing roots that had found the Potomac.

And grantless, devoid of proposals in the national interest, powerless to orbit however cheap a beep, the liberal arts floundered. Yet they grew wealthy too, willy-nilly. No longer did English professors hover near the poverty line, their soles patched with old pawn tickets. Thousands of twenty-year-olds, having matched their teachers' skills against those of the checker in the neighborhood Safeway, noted that while the demands were comparable it was the teacher who was now the better paid and elected to get themselves hired as teachers. Teaching, for the first time in history, had become attractive for the money that was in it. Thank you, Sputnik.

Or no thanks. It wasn't teaching, it was sheep-herding much of the time, many places. The law of demand that had sucked those salaries skyward, and vacuumed into the profession all those eager beavers with their jargon of Job Security, responded to the milling of a million sheep, plodding through Requirements: required English, required Art History, required Frog Dissection. Some gazed with wide eyes, some lay back and hiccuped. What are we supposed to be doing here? The Computer put us here. (That was a 60s syndrome: blame the computer.) Suddenly, late in the 60s it became clear that the roof was falling in.

In California Ronald Reagan got blamed, in New York Vietnam.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As well blame the sun-eating devils. Iron laws eclipsed that sun, brought down that roof. Academe, 1977, looks back to that brief golden age when everything on campus seemed to prosper, and looks round at a bleakness of small colleges going broke and overruns in the Ph.D. supply forcing young Doctors of Philosophy into cab-driving. There are devils aplenty to be blamed: Vietnam, Richard Nixon, Republicans, OPEC, color TV, the fickle national mood, inflation, Wall Street, materialism. The recourse to devils is comprehensible: Things were going so well they ought to have gone on going well. But try, just for size, the hypothesis that things weren't going well at all: that the time of warmth wasn't sunshine, it was fever.

One symptom of fever was the zany dependence on Washington, zany because it was a piecework dependence, whole academic departments living in cardhouses of grants. Grants came for projects, and projects had to be supported before they were undertaken. It had to be demonstrated that they would yield important results in the necessary absence of any evidence whatever that they would yield any result. A Senior Investigator was a man adept at writing up projects, in the sort of triplicate doubletalk that affirms significance while stopping just short of promises. Touch up the punctuation of a choice slab of Eisenhowerese and you have a pretty good model for a grant application. Ike was an intellectuals' Zola.

The propriety of Washington's benevolence is another question entirely. A purist right-wing argument runs as follows, that since the principal beneficiary of an education is the student, the student (assisted, if necessary, by loans) should be liable for its costs. The counter-argument holds that people at large benefit sufficiently from the existence of an educated elite to justify a deflection of their tax dollars toward that education. Outright grants, on that principle, are justifiable. Project grants are something else entirely. They encourage two fallacies: the division of indivisible human curiosity into budgetable entities called projects, and the need to sell each project on its own.

These distortions may seem at first sight to affect only the universities' scientific establishment, and only a portion of that. Not so: They enshrine the assumption that underlay every part of the academic prosperity of the 60s, and rendered that prosperity perilous: the assumption that here, as in a hardware store, the payer deserves a breakdown of what he is paying for.

What was being paid for was (symbolically) an Answer to the Challenge of Sputnik: in short, an improved technological establishment. We needed to know more than we did about numerous things hitherto granted low public priority: rocketry, satellites, re-entry, instrumentation, space medicine, telemetry, weightlessness, solid-state devices, propellants, nuclear drives, the solar wind, on and on. And in a hurry. The universities were (1) to conduct research in a hundred such conceivable areas and in many inconceivable; (2) to teach young scientists; (3) to go on, of course, being whatever it was they were, which was doubtless a good thing to be, though Sputnik seemed to have shown it wasn't enough. As Ike said of something else entirely, "I don't believe I ever spoke out against it, I said this, it was just from—since I have never made a deep study of this thing, because what was the use, from my viewpoint, I said I thought on balance it was unwise." That about summed up the plight of the liberal arts, which found themselves justifying their own relevance quite as tendentiously as any piece of research got justified on a grant application.

Now research, until it's been done, always sounds like a joke, one reason, undone, it's so difficult to justify. Arthur Koestler has argued that the mental faculty that can frame jokes and the faculty that can frame scientific hypotheses work identically and may even be identical. Both a joke and a new hypothesis entail bringing together what hasn't been thought of in one mental act before. When is a human being like a cat? When he's in free fall, for instance adrift outside a spacecraft, and needs to alter his position with nothing to push against. And the better to train astronauts, countless cats were dropped, and how they contrived to always land on their feet was studied by high-speed photography. The dynamic analysis is very tricky. Imagine writing the Grant Proposal for that, and you grasp the usefulness of Eisenhowerese to keep the Granting Body from just busting out laughing. (I don't know if a proposal was ever written; maybe NASA simply rounded up some alley cats and dropped them quietly in a back room.)

So the surreal enters, and the rhetoric of disguising surreality. And once they've entered, they commence to valve the flow of everything fluid: words, ideas, cash.

As curiosity was subdivided into projects, so teaching was subdivided into departments and programs and courses, each dependent on reams of justification. Department chairmen wrote to the Administration the way Senior Investigators wrote to Washington, in quite the same idiom, and with quite the same high-minded but semi-obfuscatory intent. As programs multiplied, their hold on reality diminished, and quite sensible innovations went into gobbledegook disguise because administrators had lost all capacity to evaluate good sense.

As for the liberal arts, they were soon subserving Objectives, their capacity for growth and their right to a slice of the enlarging pie connected with their demonstrable ability to further the Whole Student. A student raising tired eyes from a semi-dissected frog ought obviously to rest them on slides of the Sistine Ceiling; Art Hist then, 3 credits, MWF at 10, and lest we discriminate against the color-blind make it interchangeable with Mus Apprec, also 3 credits. And if the number of Student Contact-hours in Art Hist and Mus Apprec becomes thereby a function of Biology enrollment—ultimately, of the capacity of a frog-farm to produce—still the Art and Music Departments aren't really complaining. They're expanding. Who doesn't want that? From a chairman and two kindly old profs to a vortex of ranks, a phalanx of T.A.'s, an Administrative Assistant and a Typist, an Audio-Visual budget, very likely soon a Building, at any rate for now a space on the Architects' Master Plan....Meanwhile, so much paperwork there's need for an assistant chairman. And anything growing as healthily as all that merits a Graduate Program, with Ph.D. seminars and orals and a bigger slice of the library budget.

That was what collapsed toward the end of the sixties. I leave as an exercise to the reader the filling in of details: the role of Student Revolt in the collapse; the pertinancy of the cries for relevance, which commingle activist mindlessness with a sane response to officialese; the question of state vs. federal largesse, and of procedures for bestowing it without strings. I'll conclude with a Multiversity anecdote. →

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Multiversity grew and prospered, and within it sundry Departments grew and prospered, thriving each one on Requirements. Requirements, being interpreted mean: If you will force your students to take courses in my department, I will force my students to take courses in yours. Thus we shall jointly thrive.

And lo, it became observable that students, a few of them, were solemnly sitting through courses in what they already knew, and that this was especially true of the very best students: Young prodigies, for example, who having for recreation in their high-school years worked clear through texts on calculus and group theory were now being required to enroll in Algebra I.

There was a man who thought this was outrageous. But he had colleagues who seemed to think it more outrageous that students should presume to know so much already, and other colleagues so inured to the profitable system they would even extol the virtues of drudgery; so this man went to the Administration and proposed that incoming students, particularly in mathematics and sciences, should be exempted from elementary courses in those subjects if they demonstrably had no need of them. But that was too simple.

But he was persistent. And after much thought and much writing of proposals (the purpose of a proposal, as we have seen, being to conceal its real thrust behind screens of high-minded obfuscation) a huge budgetary entity was created, indeed a separate College in which such exceptional students could be enrolled; and that College could draw up requirements, and dispense with requirements, as it saw fit. (That was administratively feasible; a mere rewriting of the general requirements was not.)

And that College, in compliance with inexorable law, acquired a name meant to obscure its purpose (which, be it remembered, was merely the abrogation in certain cases of certain Mickey Mouse requirements). Removing requirements looks like a step back, and so must be disguised as a great step forward: hence what we may call the College of Cosmic Awareness. It was allotted a modest building, and budgets, and secretaries, and appurtenances; and after a little was inscribed in the Master Plan, with land reserved for its eventual Edifice.

And one day the Administration noted on its Table of Organization a College of Cosmic Awareness of which no administrator could any longer recollect the use. Was it the same thing as an Honors Program? Did it offer to make young folk cosmically aware? Had it even a curriculum? The one way to find out was to appoint a committee, which means designating some high-salaried people to drop what they were paid for doing and write a report.

...A tricky report, since it needed to skirt its recipients' idiocy. Ike's Collected Press Conferences contain a possible model: "We found no place where we were in opposite camps, and we—someone made the observation as we left, whichever wing we all belonged to, it was the same one, and was not different ones." But that style takes a lifetime's mastering, and the committee's report lacks much of being memorable because its chairman had not that mastery. I was the chairman. □

Stephen Miller

Vietnam and the Responsibility of Intellectuals

"A great deal of intelligence can be invested in ignorance when the need for illusion is deep."—Saul Bellow

Though most Americans prefer to forget about the war in Vietnam, dismissing it glibly as a nightmare, the country and its people still remain in the news—not as headlines but as short takes that haunt the middle pages, cropping up to discomfit us. In the spring and summer of this year, while the new administration signalled its interest in establishing diplomatic relations with the Vietnamese government, we learned about life in the new Vietnam. There were reports about re-education camps where conditions were "Gulag-like," and reports about the "boat cases"—those Vietnamese (as well as Laotians and Cambodians) who had managed to flee the country in small fishing boats, only to end up—for the most part—stranded in miserable detention camps or anchored offshore somewhere, having been refused permission to gain entry. Escaping at the rate of 1,700 per month, these refugees were hoping that some country would extend them an invitation to settle. It is from these refugees, as well as from several intrepid journalists, that we have learned about the Stalinist cruelties occurring in Vietnam and the indescribable horrors taking place in Cambodia, whose government, according to Jean Lacouture, is performing "the bloodiest revolution in history."

It would be easy to pass over this news in silence. Few Americans, after all, are inclined to read anything more about that part of the world. Yet these reports raise important questions about the conduct of some Americans who opposed American intervention in Vietnam—questions that should be confronted no matter what position one took with regard to the American role in the war. Some critics of the war, we should remember, did not merely resign themselves to the collapse of the South Vietnamese government, accepting an outcome that—all things considered—was the best of a bad bargain. Rather, some critics of the war *welcomed* a Communist victory because they believed in the wisdom and compassion of the National Liberation Front (NLF) and the North Vietnamese government. They saw Hanoi as the model the NLF would imitate when it set up shop in the South. One raises the question of Vietnam again, therefore, not to dwell on the nature of the American intervention, but to question the responsibility of those critics who blithely prescribed a North Vietnamese brand of medicine as the appropriate remedy for a diseased South—critics, I should add, who often made much of "the responsibility of intellectuals."

The phrase comes from the title of Noam Chomsky's essay, written in 1965, in which he argues that intellectuals should "seek the truth lying hidden behind the veil of distortion and misrepresentation." Honorable sentiments, but during the war years Chomsky and other supposedly "responsible" intellectuals—among the most prominent were Susan Sontag, Mary McCarthy, and Frances FitzGerald—interpreted that task in a peculiar way. They honed their critical pens solely on American misrepresentation. When the official spokesmen of the North Vietnamese

Stephen Miller is with the National Endowment for the Humanities.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

government and the NLF gave their version of the truth, these intellectuals either reported it without comment or endorsed it wholeheartedly.

According to these writers, the war in Vietnam was less a civil war between North and South than a revolutionary war in which a corrupt, westernized South Vietnamese regime, propped up by the Americans, was opposed by a moral, patriotic NLF. Whereas the government of South Vietnam, supported mainly by decadent, middle-class entrepreneurs, was motivated by greed and dishonesty, the NLF, supported by the vast majority of Vietnamese, was motivated by an intense desire to rid the nation of foreign influence. The Vietcong, Frances FitzGerald said in her influential book, *Fire in the Lake* (the winner of a National Book Award), wanted "to restore their country and their history to themselves."

In order to give Americans a glimpse of what such a future might be like in the South—as well as to report on the devastating effects of massive American bombing—these writers made pilgrimages to the North, where they had long conversations with the leaders of the regime, who took them on guided tours and told them how the North Vietnamese government would assist the NLF in achieving its goals. Chomsky, Sontag, McCarthy, and FitzGerald went to the North to see how the future worked, and thus to suggest how it would work in the South after the corrupt regime in Saigon collapsed.

Like most pilgrims, these writers were often breathless with enthusiasm for the holy place they were visiting. Susan Sontag reported that North Vietnam was "a deeply civil society which places great value on gentleness and the demands of the heart." According to Sontag, not only did the North Vietnamese government run an "ethical society," it was also a government that "loves the people." Quoting Ho Chi Minh's observation that, "Nothing is more precious than independence and liberty," she added that "one could indeed, as the Vietnamese have, live spiritually from that simple sentence for a long time."

McCarthy was similarly worshipful. In her report from Hanoi, she assured Americans that "the idea of forgiveness and rehabilitation is underlined by North Vietnamese and NLF officials in discussing the government functionaries of the South." McCarthy was, in fact, quite taken with the North Vietnamese officials, especially the prime minister, who was "a man of magnetic allure," emotional and yet at the same time highly intellectual. She felt much more comfortable talking to the cultured, French-speaking North Vietnamese officials, calling one of them "an old friend of mine," than she did talking to several captured American pilots who, she said, "were somewhat pathetic cases of mental malnutrition." She was certain that these mentally well-nourished leaders ran "a moral, ascetic government, concerned above all with the *quality* of Vietnamese life" (emphasis in the original).

Frances FitzGerald, the expert on Vietnam, was also charmed by the intelligence and compassion of the North Vietnamese and NLF officials, who told her that they wanted a government of "peace, democracy, [and] national concord" in the South. Though these officials spoke to her about eventually reunifying the country, they realized that they would need "a fairly long period of transition, in which they could do the necessary political work in the cities."

The predictions of Chomsky and company, as we have learned from the reports emanating from the new Vietnam, were absurdly wrong. Take, for example, McCarthy's notion of "forgiveness and rehabilitation": Countless Vietnamese have been arbitrarily denounced and arrested, to be sent off to re-education camps. (The figures given by respected journalists range from 100,000 to 500,000.) And the campus where these detainees undergo their "rehabilitation" is usually a malaria-infested jungle. According to Le Thi Anh, a Vietnamese refugee who was a member of President Ford's Advisory Committee on Indochinese Refugees, "one out of every three Saigon families has a member in one of the camps.... Thousands of camp inmates have died from lack of food, medicine, and clothing. Thousands have committed suicide, some have been secretly liquidated, others perish through staged 'accidents.'"

Or take FitzGerald's notion of "peace, democracy, [and] national concord." Theodore Jacqueney, a former State Department official who recently interviewed many refugees, says that, "Vietnam's detention camps and prisons are full of onetime Thieu opponents of the left, center, and right, many of whom were once victimized by the old regime for advocating democratic liberties and accommodation with the Communists to end the war." The news from the new Vietnam also makes a mockery of FitzGerald's idea that during the war the NLF constituted an autonomous force and was not controlled by the North—an idea that was the operating premise of *Fire in the Lake*. The NLF, these reports make clear, has been all but eliminated, northerners hold all key posts in the South, and the economy of the South has been impoverished by the exactions of the North. As Fox Butterfield of the *New York Times* puts it: "The northern Vietnamese have tended to treat the formerly more prosperous South like conquered territory."

Then there is Sontag's complacent quotation from Ho Chi Minh, which now serves as a curse against the new regime. Butterfield reports that in some places in Vietnam "people have scrawled on walls one of Ho Chi Minh's most often-cited quotations: 'Nothing is more precious than independence and liberty.'" Such is the furious sarcasm of the conquered, of those who must submit to re-education. The Vietnamese, Sontag had thought, have lived "spiritually from that simple sentence for a long time." Now many of them are dying spiritually from it—the boat cases speaking volumes about "the quality of life," as McCarthy would have it, in the new Vietnam.

II

During the war years Chomsky and company were eminently voluble on the question of Vietnam, yet —so far as I can tell—they have remained silent about the new reports, which describe the ways in which the Vietnamese government does its "necessary political work." This reticence is surprising, since Chomsky himself, on his trip to Hanoi, said that it would be "extremely interesting" to see how the Vietnamese deal with the problem of creating a new society.

These writers are silent, I suspect, because they believe that Americans, as original sinners in Vietnam, have no right to criticize present realities. Such is the attitude of a group of Americans headed by Corliss Lamont—a veteran fellow-traveller —that placed an advertisement in the *New York Times*. After belittling the figures given for those detained in re-education camps, they made the following statement: "We share the view that American citizens should be gravely concerned about abuses of human rights, whether they occur in our country or abroad....But Vietnam presents a very different case. The present suffering of the Vietnamese people is largely a consequence of the war itself for which the United States bears a continuing responsibility." Unravelling the twisted logic of this statement, one comes upon the following peculiar notion: On account of our intervention in Vietnam, Americans are morally compelled to acquiesce in whatever draconian measures the regime sees fit to impose upon the population. This view is quite similar to the position taken by Frances FitzGerald in *Fire in the Lake*, where she wrote that the "narrow flame of revolution" might be needed in order to "cleanse the lake of Vietnamese society from the corruption and disorder of the American war." Expanding upon this premise, FitzGerald would no doubt claim that those now fleeing Vietnam are not really Vietnamese at all, but corrupt, westernized, bourgeois "camp followers"—the phrase is McCarthy's—who

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have lost the Vietnamese "mind"—a mind, according to FitzGerald, that has no notion of freedom in the Western sense, which for them means "the disjunction of the ego from the superego." Some intellectuals are never at a loss to find "deep" reasons for justifying the infliction of misery upon others.

Describing the reports of Chomsky, Sontag, McCarthy, and FitzGerald, one could invoke Julien Benda's phrase, "*la trahison des clercs*," for these writers were, in effect, publicists for the North Vietnamese government, less interested in seeking the truth than in looking for evidence to support their beliefs. Yet why—one finds oneself wondering—were they guilty of such a betrayal? Why were these writers, who had spent a good part of their careers critically sifting the words of American politicians for samples of distortion and misrepresentation, so quick to accept without inspection the assertions of the official spokesmen of the North Vietnamese government and the NLF?

One resorts to speculation, trying to fathom their motives, because their reports so wildly flew in the face of realities—even probabilities. Surely all the historical evidence suggested that the regime in the North had never been concerned about human rights, or democracy and concord, or forgiveness and rehabilitation. Moreover, as second-generation pilgrims, aware of the absurd reports delivered by American and English intellectuals who visited the Soviet Union during the thirties, these intellectuals should have been inoculated against such enthusiastic ignorance—and should have been especially wary of the soothing sounds they heard in the North. North Vietnam, after all, has always prided itself on its close ideological ties to the Soviet Union. But Chomsky and company threw caution to the winds. Indeed, they imitated their forebears, becoming new recruits to the great tradition of willfully ignorant intellectuals, a tradition that has little prospect of falling into desuetude. For, as Saul Bellow has said, "a great deal of intelligence can be invested in ignorance when the need for illusion is deep."

The need of Chomsky and company for illusion arose, I think, out of the peculiar way in which they regarded their own relation to American society. McCarthy and Sontag made no bones about their distaste of the United States; Sontag spoke of a "society based on maximal waste," and McCarthy spoke of consumer societies with their "capitalist laws of marketing" and their "capitalist newspapers." In the writings of all four critics one hears an ostinato of disgust about the United States; the war in Vietnam was, for them, not only a misguided American adventure, it was also incontrovertible proof of the rottenness that is America. Yet, as Americans, they were implicated in this rottenness; they too were guilty. What better way of expunging this American guilt than travelling to the North to act as "witnesses" to the sins of America? If they did not want to die, they did want to do penance by risking death and participating in the suffering of the Vietnamese people.

Preoccupied with such moral strategies, the last thing these critics were interested in was the plight of particular Vietnamese. The people of Vietnam, one might say, were only grist for their mill—less real persons than characters in an allegory, in which the hero, suffering from the stain of having been born in a wasteland, undergoes purification by visiting the good "enemy." Dutifully enacting the prescribed rites, which meant listening to officials who took them on the requisite tours, and dutifully chanting the appropriate liturgy, which meant praising the solidarity, gratefulness, and fastidiousness of the North Vietnamese people, these critics performed the way the North Vietnamese government wanted them to perform.

No doubt Chomsky and company found these rituals moving and satisfying, yet a disturbing question remained: North Vietnam might be a wonderful place for the Vietnamese people, but it was not a place these intellectuals would like to live in. Sontag was vaguely troubled by this problem. And so she said: "Though I believe incorporation into such a society will greatly improve the lives of most people (and therefore support the advent of such societies), I imagine that it will in many ways impoverish mine." In talking of impoverishment, Sontag—like McCarthy, FitzGerald, and Chomsky—sneaked past a problem she did not want to confront: The society she extolled would be unbearable for her because she would not be free to operate as a "truth-seeking intellectual." And she would not be free to move about as she pleased, passport in hand. Yet this "ethical" society is good for the likes of *them*. Thus do self-righteousness and condescension go hand in hand. Thus do intellectuals, from their perches in the West, tell others that they should be content to do without rights that these intellectuals expect as a matter of course.

Chomsky and company—and others who prate about "necessary political work"—ultimately practice a morality of self-regard. Preoccupied with their own moral image in the eyes of what they consider the world, they care less about the People they champion than that these people can in no way blame them for their miseries. These guilt-ridden Americans suffer from a kind of moral hysteria, a hysteria that is shot through with contradictions. On the one hand, they urge the United States to become a "clean" world power—that is, not to get involved in the grubby business of international power politics. Yet, on the other hand, they see the United States as an evil late-capitalist state that *inevitably* is doomed to try to destroy all that is good in the world. Obsessed with America's morality—or lack thereof—they judge the United States by the severest of standards; yet when contemplating the "victims" of American power, these same rules do not apply. We may say, then, that their very moralism results in their maneuvering themselves into disingenuous moral positions.

The dangers and delusions of the moralist are an old American story, a strain in our culture that has been examined by Henry Adams in *Democracy* and by Henry James in numerous novels. Our Wilsonian idealism—our penchant for displaying and even acting upon our rectitude—has been, in fact, criticized by numerous writers on the left, and has been offered as a major reason for our intervention in Vietnam. Wilson, we should remember, said that the American people are pure and that "America is the only idealistic nation in the world." As many writers have suggested, the notion of America's purity and idealism is both arrogant and naïve, an overweening notion that makes for trouble, especially when it is used as a basis for formulating a foreign policy. Is not the obsession with American guilt that we find in Chomsky and company but the other side of the same coin—the obverse of Wilsonian idealism? Both reflect a politics that operates in a world of absolutes, in a world undisturbed by the shadows of history.

And yet the god of history perhaps did have some influence on the actions of these intellectuals. If those who recommended a massive increase in American support for the South Vietnamese government did so in part because they did not want to commit another Munich, those who journeyed to Hanoi did so in part because they did not want to be like the "good Germans"—the law-abiding citizens of the Third Reich who, by their inaction, "supported" the repulsive program of their leaders. But these Americans, we should keep in mind, did not simply protest against the actions of their own government; these passionately moral Americans, who did not want to be slavishly obedient to their own government, abased themselves before a foreign, totalitarian regime. One wonders if Chomsky and company ever think about what happens to the "citizens" of the People's Republic of Vietnam who protest against the policies of their government—a government these intellectuals praised for its decency and humanity.

Perhaps Chomsky and company would dismiss these reflections by saying that one had to make a choice and that choosing Hanoi was the lesser evil. The North, they would probably say, stood for a Vietnamese future whereas the South belonged to a hateful, colonial past; and the future, despite the "appearance" of repression in Vietnam now, would somehow bring with it a good life for the Vietnamese. History, in other words, was on the side of the North—the Communist future being the only legitimate heir to the pre-colonial past, the only force that could restore Vietnam to the Vietnamese. This kind of reasoning, which pervades *Fire in the Lake* and lurks in the background of Chomsky's, Sontag's, and McCarthy's reports, has been subjected to scathing criticism by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nicola Chiaromonte, the Italian essayist, in a recent issue of *Dissent*. Attacking what he called "the widespread habit among our contemporaries of judging every problem concerning social reality in terms of history," Chiaromonte said that "human existence, as we know, is uncertain, relative, transient; and it loses all its rights in the unlimited horizon of 'historical perspectives' and 'total' demands." History, Chiaromonte knows, is a savage god, one that runs roughshod over the rights of particular persons while never ceasing to proclaim that it is ultimately for the People. Such wisdom constitutes intellectual responsibility, a responsibility that Chomsky and company continually betrayed in their writings on the war in Vietnam. □

Robert Asahina

Why Were We in Vietnam?

The war that produced so much in the way of political turmoil has yielded very little in the way of art.

Nearly four years after the signing of the cease-fire agreement and a dozen years after the escalation of American involvement, the Vietnam war has still almost entirely escaped the attention of our playwrights, novelists, and moviemakers. With the noteworthy exception of David Rabe's drama trilogy (*The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel, Sticks and Bones,* and *Streamers*), there has been a depressing dearth of significant art dealing with the war.

Some critics have even gone so far as to suggest that fiction is an inadequate means of capturing the reality of the American experience in Vietnam. For example, in a recent review of Larry Heinemann's *Close Quarters*, one of the very few fictional accounts of the war to surface in a decade, Ivan Gold glumly concluded that Vietnam is "novel-proof." Obviously, Gold could be generalizing from a particularly unrepresentative sample of writing. Yet this much is inescapable: The war that produced so much in the way of political turmoil has so far yielded very little in the way of art—or even popular culture.

It could be argued, of course, that simply not enough time has passed for the fruits of the creative processes to appear. After all, as has often been noted, Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* was not published until 16 years after the end of World War II. Heller, however, is a notoriously slow worker; his book was at least eight years in the writing alone. By contrast, Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* was released in 1948, just three years after V-J Day, and was quickly followed by James Gould Cozzen's *Guard of Honor* (1949), Jame Jones' *From Here to Eternity* (1951), and Herman Wouk's *The Caine Mutiny* (1951). To be sure, those works varied widely in literary merit, but no war novel comparable even to the least of them has yet emerged from Vietnam. Eight years of war and four years of peace have inspired little else besides Robin Moore's egregious *The Green Berets* (1965).

Some mention must be made, however, of Mailer's *Why Are We in Vietnam?* (1967) and Robert Stone's *Dog Soldiers*, winner of the National Book Award in 1974—even though neither actually deals directly with the war. In answer to the question posed by his title, Mailer spends 140-odd pages describing a bear hunt in Alaska; the very word "Vietnam" does not occur again until the last sentence of the book. And the title of Stone's brilliant *tour de force* refers not to infantrymen but to narcotics smugglers; although the story begins in Saigon, it ends in Southern California, by way of San Francisco.

What is significant about these two novels is the implicit suggestion that the Vietnam war is accessible through the experience not of combat but of what might be called the war ethos—the cult of violence for Mailer, and of drugs for Stone. In effect, at least for some writers, the true story of the war is to be found on the homefront rather than the battleground.

This shift in focus is certainly evident in Rabe's much acclaimed trilogy. Both *Streamers* and *Sticks and Bones* are set entirely in the United States, and only about a third of the action in *The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel* takes place overseas. Indeed, the very strength of the key metaphor in *Streamers*—that of parachutists suspended between heaven and earth—is grounded in the play's setting: an unspecified stateside jump school, where the airborne trainees are caught between civilian life and combat.

The homefront figures even more prominently in *Sticks and Bones*, the story of a soldier, blinded in combat, whose homecoming shatters the middle-class complacency of his family. Unfortunately, the play suffers—especially now, in retrospect, six years after its premiere—from Rabe's inability to elevate a theme that is constantly in danger of sinking into banality: the plight of the returning veteran. Moreover, in the meantime, writers for television and the movies had quickly turned the hapless homecoming soldier into a comically absurd caricature: For several years, a maladjusted, usually drug-addicted, and often homicidal ex-G.I. seemed to be responsible for every felony perpetrated on the streets of San Francisco or in Kojak's Midtown South precinct. (Even as recently as this year, an insane former combat pilot flew a bomb-laden blimp to disaster in *Black Sunday*.)

The Vietnam veteran came to play such a peculiar part in popular melodrama partly because of the pressure brought against the networks and producers by minority groups around 1970, which resulted (at least temporarily) in the near disappearance of black, Hispanic, and even American Indian criminals from the screen. Forced to come up with another minority group to slander, Hollywood rather improbably hit upon the disgruntled veteran—who always (somewhat unrealistically) turned out to be a WASP. Moreover, screenwriters were (and are) typically inclined to picture criminals sympathetically as victims of their circumstances—and what could be more conducive to crime than an unjust war waged by a sick society?

Perhaps more important, though, screenwriters are simply always in search of a new outsider, a new alienated anti-hero, whose plight can be exploited for the purpose of yet another critique of bourgeois society. In this respect, Hollywood is motivated less by sociology or politics than by a particularly debased version of the adversary impulse that characterizes modern literature. For example, although there has been a great deal of publicity this fall about Hollywood's recent "discovery" of

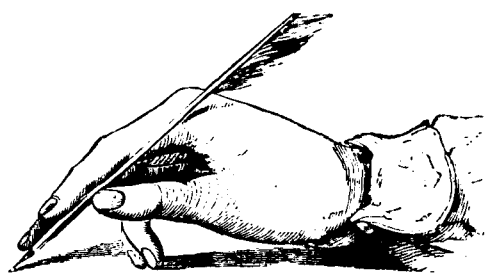
Robert Asahina is managing editor of The Public Interest *and film critic for the* New Leader.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Vietnam war, it is striking that most of the movies to be released in the next few months are concerned not with the horrors of combat but with the anguish of homecoming: *Heroes*, with Henry Winkler as an ex-G.I. readjusting to civilian life; *Deer Hunter*, featuring Robert De Niro (who portrayed a crazed ex-Marine in *Taxi Driver* last year) as a veteran struggling to make a living as a steelworker; *Rolling Thunder*, written by Paul Schrader, who was responsible for the screenplay of *Taxi Driver*; and *Coming Home*, starring Jane Fonda (!) as a social worker involved in the reorientation of returning soldiers.* This crop of what are alleged to be war films can be put in the proper perspective by imagining that the majority of movies about World War II were simply variations on the theme of *The Best Years of Our Lives*. Hollywood has not so much discovered the war as rediscovered social realism.

Hollywood's brand of realism, of course, has always been pretty far removed from the real world. Considering how skittish Hollywood has typically been regarding "controversial" topics, it is not surprising that Vietnam should be discovered in such a perverse fashion, a decade after the fact. It must be remembered that John Wayne, of all people, had a great deal of difficulty convincing the studios to produce his 1968 screen adaptation of *The Green Berets*.†

Ordinarily, "serious" writers and dramatists would be eager to step in where Hollywood dared not tread. But, almost to a man, they did not—in what amounts to a collective failure of nerve, which needs some explaining. I think the most obvious reason is also closest to the truth: For the most part, they simply did not belong to the class that bore the burden of fighting the war. Art is born out of experience, and the experience of our artists, as members of the intellectual class, was primarily of being against the war.



The situation was much different, to take the obvious example, in World War II. Norman Mailer, for one, went straight from Harvard to the South Pacific: *The Naked and the Dead* sprang from his experiences with the 112th Cavalry in the Philippines and with the occupation forces in Japan. During the Vietnam era, naturally, Mailer was well into middle age, but his younger counterparts in the counterculture, indulging in the luxury of draft deferments, were more likely to be marching in protest than in combat. (Or else they became journalists, like Robert Stone, who was an anti-war foreign correspondent in Vietnam. By the mid-1960s, Mailer himself had long since abandoned fiction for his own peculiar brand of personal journalism.)

More importantly, in World War II the army served as almost a model "melting pot." Class antagonisms (not to mention racial hostilities) certainly did not disappear, but a common purpose united soldiers of widely varying backgrounds. In marked contrast, the American army in Vietnam was severely divided: The gulf between "lifers" and draftees grew to enormous proportions; racial conflict split the ranks; and enlisted men often regarded their own officers as the real enemy, to the point where "fragging" became a significant problem. (These conflicts are astutely represented in *Streamers*.)

Had Vietnam not been such an unpopular war, this internal military strife would have been less acute (although it is unlikely that it would have ceased altogether, given the widespread social turmoil of the decade). But the net effect of all the discord was to make the American soldier a foreigner to his own countrymen. Some astonishingly (and no doubt unconsciously) revealing testimony to this effect was recently offered by Theodore Solotaroff, reflecting on the limits of his moral sensibility during the Vietnam era:

> I quickly went back to viewing the war through the abstracting lens of my politics, which easily converted the soldiers, marines, and pilots I saw on TV into the sacrificial dupes or violent zealots of Kennedy and Johnson and Nixon and Kissinger. The only servicemen who were real to me were the veterans who opposed the war. They and, of course, Calley, who confirmed the worst. Then the war ended and I soon forgot about it, except to the extent that the Watergate revelations offered an oblique sense of retributive justice.

If "reality" were indeed limited to the anti-war movement, it is not surprising that artists should have ignored the war itself. With this kind of attitude shaping our literary culture, the time had long since passed when the army and certainly the war were readily accessible to one who had not experienced them. Yet those with the most personal knowledge of both were the least able or the least inclined to undertake the task of transforming their experiences into art.

An exception, of course, was Rabe, who is a Vietnam veteran. Rabe is also exceptional in not falsifying his experiences in the process of making them public. He is saved by his art from the self-indulgence that has tended to characterize journalistic accounts of the war that have proliferated in the absence of art. Books like Philip Caputo's *A Rumor of War* (praised by Solotaroff in the review quoted), Ron Kovic's *Born on the Fourth of July*, and Gloria Emerson's *Winners and Losers* (to cite only three of the most recent best-sellers), and documentary films like *Hearts and Minds* (winner of an Oscar in 1975), *Far from Vietnam*, *In the Year of the Pig*, and *Hoa Binh*, do not offer the sort of understanding provided by art. Instead they permit a guilt-ridden complicity in which "facts" replace insights, and the accumulation of endless details substitutes for the imaginative transformation of experience. Of course, if we are seeking relief from the burden of conscience rather than an understanding of the truth, then the numbing effect of the new journalism is certainly to be preferred to the potentially disquieting power of art.

Yet Rabe's trilogy, while rooted in experience, is revealing in a somewhat different respect: The more it approaches the level of serious art, the less it specifically has to do with Vietnam. When *The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel* was first produced in 1972, it was mistakenly (and, in retrospect, excessively) praised as a powerful protest against the war by critics who were eager to exaggerate its virtues merely because of their own political sentiments. But Pavlo Hummel is not just a "grunt" in Vietnam; he is the Everyman who has always figured in dramas about war and the military—from Woyzeck to Gomer Pyle. (The *artistic* failing of Rabe's play is that the main character more often resembles the latter than the former.)

Likewise, when Megan Terry's *Viet Rock* first appeared, it was erroneously criticized by both the Right (for being unpatriotic) and the Left (for being insufficiently radical in its protest against the war). Yet, as Stanley Kauffmann has noted, both sorts of objection were beside the point: To the extent that it was theatrically valid, it was politically "irrelevant."

Perhaps this is as it should be: The claim to aesthetic legitimacy is made at the expense of political relevance. We should not expect art to clarify partisan issues, for its significance lies in illuminating the general by way of the particular. The search for art that sheds light on Vietnam might be misguided. Perhaps the war novel or

---

* The only forthcoming releases actually set in Vietnam are Francis Ford Coppola's long-awaited *Apocalypse Now*, supposedly inspired by Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (which was also the inspiration for Stone's *Dog Soldiers*), and starring Marlon Brando; and Sidney J. Furie's *The Boys in Company C*, with a cast of unknowns. It is impossible to know what to expect from either.

† Since Wayne's disastrous epic was the only Hollywood feature made about the war while it was still being fought (apart from *The Losers*, a low-budget "biker," in which the Hell's Angels rather improbably rumbled with the Vietcong), film historians will undoubtedly have a great deal of fun trying to interpret all the disguised allegories of the period: Richard Brooks' *The Professionals*, Robert Aldrich's *Ulzana's Raid*, and all of Sam Peckinpah's Westerns will certainly merit scrutiny. With the exception of Robert Altman's *M*A*S*H*, in which Korea functioned as a surrogate for Vietnam, in the 1960s and early 1970s Westerns were the closest thing to Vietnam war movies.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

war movie or war drama never really was an interesting or enlightening genre: After all, *The Red Badge of Courage* is a great novel about war, not merely a great "war novel" (or "anti-war novel," for that matter).

Yet the question "Why were we in Vietnam?" is certainly worth asking. Historians will no doubt have countless answers in the coming years. But artists could have made an important contribution to the process of understanding, while the war was being waged and the question was most urgent. It is to their discredit that they did not even try. □

Michael Novak

McCarthyism, Still the Life of the Party

To ask whether McCarthyism or Communism posed the more serious threat in 1952 obscures the real issue, namely, the failure of liberals and socialists to acknowledge profound errors of moral and political judgment.

Around no issue have family arguments among intellectuals been more intense for sixty years than around what position ought to be taken up concerning Communism. If, indeed, one wishes to understand major intellectual struggles even today, one must cope with such episodes as one that occurred in the year 1952. Such an exercise brings a profound feeling of sadness, that so much energy has been wasted and that events are again stirring memories along ancient battlelines. It may be useful to head off cyclic repetition by conceiving of the problem in a new way.

A researcher into the debate *circa* 1952 will be struck by how old-fashioned the references to "Stalinism" or even to "Communism" now seem. We have learned by 1977 to think polycentrically. The struggles between Maoist China and the Soviet Union are vivid in consciousness, and the countless crosscurrents in that vast part of the world we roughly refer to as "communist" (lower case, these days) are well known to us. In the sense in which "Communism" was perceived to be a threat by all the participants in the debates of the 1950s—and one should emphasize that *all* parties to the debates were explicitly anti-Communist—"communism" is not perceived to be a threat today. Some may hold that the *Soviet Union* is such a threat, even a far more dangerous and vastly more powerful threat in 1977 than it was in 1952. But contemporary emphasis would scarcely be on some ideological mystique, on some spiritual virus, or on networks of domestic espionage that might attack this nation "from within." Emphasis today falls upon well-known laws of national aggrandizement, imperial purpose, and military expenditure.

The debate of 1952 was often described by partisans on both sides as a debate between anti-Communists and anti-anti-Communists. The issue, so we are often told, is whether McCarthyism or Communism was the more serious menace. But this must have been a smokescreen. For neither McCarthyism nor Communism is, in 1977, the relevant name for what stirs our deepest anxieties. Both turned out to have been bogeymen, compared to realities. So if the debates of 1952 still go on, despite language that exaggerated or masked the true nature of the struggle, what was then at stake? If we grasped that clearly, we would surely have clearer insight into what divides us today.

The *locus classicus* of 1952 is an essay in the March *Commentary* by Irving Kristol, around which an unusually large correspondence grew up then, and a quite passionate debate still simmers today. Two sentences in that article are the focus of that controversy. By at least one interpretation—the one its critics make, naturally—these sentences are not altogether happy. Read in context, however, these sentences do not support the damaging interpretation. A researcher can hardly avoid concluding that there were strong passions in the air awaiting some such sentences, ready to fix upon them as an excuse, an occasion, a battle cry. The sentences did not cause a split. They focussed it. The heart has reasons which the reason sometimes does not wish to face.

The classic article by Kristol is called " 'Civil Liberties,' 1952—A Study in Confusion." The offending sentences, quoted so often since, run as follows:

> There is one thing that the American people know about Senator McCarthy: he, like them, is unequivocally anti-Communist. About the spokesmen for American liberalism, they feel they know no such thing, and with some justification.*

Even on their face, these sentences bear two interpretations. According to one, many Americans are puzzled by the relationship of liberals to Communism, and liberals should prevent that. According to another, McCarthy is clear, but liberals are suspect. In an exchange of correspondence in *Commentary* in 1968, Irving Howe found two implications here that he did not like: (1) an ugly comparison between McCarthy and the spokesmen for American liberalism; and (2) an errant characterization of "the spokesmen for American liberalism."

To interpret a mischievous text, one examines its proximate context. Regarding the article in question, one does not have to look far. The sentences immediately before and after the quoted sentences thicken Kristol's meaning considerably. In those sentences which come before, Kristol denounces as "a calamitous error" the belief "that because a vulgar demagogue lashes out at both Communism and liberalism as identical," it is therefore necessary to protect Communism in order to defend liberalism. Liberals may believe that they alone understand Communism and thoughtfully oppose it. "They are nonetheless mistaken," Kristol writes, "and it is a mistake on which McCarthy waxes fat." Immediately after this line come the offending sentences. Kristol, in a word, was trying to commend a more appropriate strategy for defeating McCarthy, a new way of drawing the battleline.

Kristol's offending sentences end, it will be recalled, with this

Michael Novak is Ledden Watson Distinguished Professor of Religion at Syracuse University.

* Not counting citations in *Commentary* in the May and June issues, these sentences are quoted by: Irving Howe in *Partisan Review* (1954); Michael Harrington in *Dissent* (1955); Richard Rovere in *Partisan Review*, with a response by Irving Kristol (1952); Irving Howe in *Commentary*, quoting Michael Harrington, and then in an exchange with Irving Kristol (1968); and Irving Howe in a book review in the *New York Times* (1976). Lillian Hellman also alludes to Kristol's article in *Scoundrel Time* (1976).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

phrase: "and with some justification." The very next sentence begins: "With what justification, can be seen from an illustrative incident involving Professor Henry Steele Commager, a distinguished historian who never was a Communist and never will be." Kristol goes on to analyze a rather well-known (and later anthologized) article by Professor Commager in the May 1947 *Harper's*. If his full illustration of Commager's confusions need not detain us, his central accusation should be cited:

> Professor Commager seems to be seduced by the insidious myth according to which Communism is a political trend continuous with liberalism, only more impatient and inclined to the fanatical. It is a myth that Senator McCarthy, for his own ends, is happy to accept, since it allows him to tag a New Dealer as being by nature an embryonic Communist.

Kristol's entire thesis is stated in the beginning of his article. By 1952, "there has been drawn a line of battle"; and in the way that line has been drawn, liberals are yielding too much territory to McCarthy: "Is it conceivable that the line was incorrectly drawn in the first place? The liberals are loathe to weigh the possibility, as it gives comfort to the enemy; Senator McCarthy for his part has no cause for dissatisfaction with things as they are...."

The body of Kristol's article consists of citations from contemporary articles and books by Professor Commager, Alan Barth, Zechariah Chafee, and Francis Biddle, which exemplify the tactic he deplores. His criticism of "the major segment of American liberalism" for its behavior during the 1930s is far more devastating: "If American liberalism is not willing to discriminate between its achievements and its sins [in the 1930s]," he writes, "it only disarms itself before Senator McCarthy...." Kristol accuses the liberals of the 1930s who joined hands with the Communists in a Popular Front of committing errors of grave moral and political consequence, not only private errors but public errors, of interest to all their fellow citizens.

Kristol accuses the liberals of the 1950s of defending themselves poorly. The reason for their poor self-defense, he suggests, is dishonesty. They try to take their way around the past, attributing political errors to harmless and private "idealism," whether their own or others. Instead of insisting in the 1950s that dissenters and nonconformists stand up and tell the truth, too many defend moral cowardice. The heart of Kristol's article is expressed in the following words:

> There is only one way that the despotism of public opinion can be resisted. That is for a person with unpopular views to express himself, loudly, brazenly, stubbornly, and with disregard of the consequences. Such a person may have to suffer for his convictions, as others have suffered before him, and as others will suffer after. But the responsibility for the mind's freedom in a democracy lies with the intransigent thinker, with his courage to shout the truth in the face of the mob, with his faith that truth will win out, and with his maddening commitment to the truth, win or lose. Yet, with all the occasions of the last several years, not a single liberal voice was to say to these strange "victims" of Hollywood and radio: Speak up and damn the consequences! Let them take your job—as they certainly will anyway; tell the truth—you have nothing to lose and honor to gain!
>
> Instead there were erudite essays on the "right to a job" that would have corroborated William James in his mournful conviction that "the prevalent fear of poverty among our educated classes is the worst moral disease from which our civilization suffers."

Kristol plainly understood that the Stalinism of that time was an organized, subversive movement in which those who took part gave up their right to independent thought, and in which the idea of a civil society and its liberties could not be entertained. On this point, he and most of his critics agreed. Those who then continued to call themselves socialists, as Irving Howe put it, "cut whatever ties of sentiment still held them to the Bolshevik tradition and made the indissoluble connection between democracy and socialism a crux of their thought." But Kristol wanted them to go one step farther: not only to be anti-Communist, but to cease to ally the cause of Communists and fellow-travelers with the cause of liberals. In order not to destroy civil liberties, he argued, there were some cases in which one would wish to defend the right of Communists and fellow-travelers "to be what they are." In such cases, he warned, the liberal "must speak as one of *us*, defending *their* liberties. To the extent he insists that they are on our side, that we can defend our liberties only by uncritically defending theirs, he will be taken as speaking as one of them." With these lines, Kristol concluded his article.

It is obvious that Kristol loathed McCarthy and all that he stood for. It is equally obvious that he carried his heaviest argument against what he deemed to be the stronger party, stronger not only in intellect but also in longevity and ultimate importance. His critics, of course, saw reality differently. Michael Harrington wrote in 1955 that Kristol cast his "weight not so much in defense of those civil liberties which were steadily being nibbled away, but rather against the few remaining fellow-travelers who tried to exploit the civil liberties issue." He called the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, which Kristol led, "too jaded, too imbued with the sourness of indiscriminate anti-Stalinism to give itself to an active struggle against the dominant trend of contemporary life in America." Irving Howe picked up this argument thirteen years later: "What Harrington charged was that dominant figures in the ACCF were inclined to subordinate the fight against McCarthy to a campaign against those deluded liberals who, in the name of anti-McCarthyism, dismissed the threat of Stalinism. Harrington was saying that both represented major assaults upon freedom, and that within the U.S. itself, during the 50s, McCarthyism was clearly the more immediate danger."

Now, at first, this looks like simply a judgment of relative weights and measures. Some could say *this* was the greater danger, some could say *that*. But those involved in this debate do not really regard it in that pragmatic light. Something far deeper, far closer to significant passions, is at stake. What is it? What can the rest of us learn from it, in helping us to make up our own minds?

In their *Commentary* correspondence in 1968, Irving Howe gives us a clue in the way he speaks about both "the intellectual calling" and "the humane ends" which originally prompt a person to become a socialist. Is it true of all political convictions that they arise from an attraction to "humane ends," or is this an attraction peculiar to socialism? Howe confesses: "That there has been a tendency within the socialist movement to regard withdrawal as apostasy and betrayal, is true." He attributes this tendency to mere weak flesh, but the language of idealism recurs too often among socialists, as Kristol rightly charges, to be dismissed so easily. Of the intellectual calling Howe writes: "Either we do try to live by some value or ideal, or we're not worth a minute's notice." But Howe does not seem to mean here simple intellectual honesty. He means commitment to a political and social vision, methodologically equivalent to a religious faith. There is no necessary contradiction between having a religious faith and being vigorously honest in intellectual matters; nor is there an inconsistency between being committed to a political and social vision and being intellectually honest. But Howe and Harrington—and a great many others—do endow their political and social vision with a quite deep religious intensity, speak of it almost entirely in moral terms, and hesitate not at all to dramatize their commitment in terms of fundamental movements of the cosmos or at least of history. Thus Howe can write:

> I admire Mr. Kristol's rhetorical strategy: in effect, "Aw, come one, Irv, you don't really believe in all that socialist stuff, do you?" But I do. It's lamentable, I know, and a sign of cultural lag. But I really want to see the major segments of the American economy socially controlled and democratically operated, and I really want a major redistribution of power and wealth in the U.S. What exasperates me about the current political situation [1968] is that the polar irrationalities now in fashion get in the way of what ought to be the main political struggle of our time, that between Mr. Kristol's conservatism and my socialism.

In 1968, the presidential electoral struggle was not between Mr. Kristol's conservatism and Mr. Howe's socialism, but between Richard Nixon and Hubert Humphrey. The political struggle between Israel and the Arab nations did not lend itself well to the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

polarity between Mr. Kristol's conservatism and Mr. Howe's socialism, and neither did the political struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union, nor even the war in Vietnam. In such matters, Kristol and Howe were probably closer to one another than either was to the major portion of public opinion. So a few words must be said about quarrels "within the family," the family of mainly Jewish intellectuals whose point of reference was New York City, and who, in 1952, were just beginning to escape a form of cultural isolation.

I imagine Jewish intellectuals in New York in 1952 ideologically stratified rather as Roman Catholics were, but with an important ironic twist. In the Jewish world, socialism—hostility to capitalism, a theory of resistance to America—was the conservative, orthodox force. The more "liberal" segments of the family evinced a willingness to "thaw," a less than convinced attachment to socialist doctrines and modes of perception, and a rather more experimental, open attitude toward the seductions of the new world. First *Commentary* and then *Partisan Review*, in the express words of defenders of the faith like Howe and Harrington, made too many surrenders to liberalism. The reason for the founding of *Dissent* was explicit: resistance. *Dissent* was anti-assimilationist, not in the sense of being purely ethnic, but in the sense of holding to a faith which, if not ancient, had moved men "for over a hundred years." *Dissent* was founded in opposition to backsliders. It was a candle lit in a great and growing darkness, keeping faith alive in the catacombs beneath the new rich world of gathering affluence, suburban shopping centers, paperback books, and multiplying middlebrows. (The socialist language of faith amid the ruins has also been potent for prominent converts from Catholicism—Michael Harrington in an earlier period, Garry Wills today.)

Dissent nourished and expounded the inherited orthodoxy; many of the less fervent retained at least a residual faith. *Dissent* rejected Stalinism, but never Marx or socialism. Others were not so sure of their affirmations but scarcely escaped the ancient fears of capitalism, of "conformity," of non-Jewish America. Such fears lodge in one's bones rather than in one's creeds; one can abandon creeds swiftly, but not fears. Thus the reservoir of anti-American feeling was enormous. And not only enormous, but necessary for the assuagement of guilt concerning one's own success. Imagine collecting grants from capitalist foundations, holding prestigious chairs at prestigious universities, making fortunes as writers, producers, and actors in Hollywood, being famous, being rich, making it: Imagine how alienated then one must prove oneself to be. Long after belief in socialism as a concrete political program has ceased to quicken one's heart, it functions as a reminder to criticize the institutions within which one succeeds. Self-hatred turns into hatred of the system in which one lives and moves and has one's heart's desires.

The major impact of socialism among New York intellectuals was, then, and is, not programmatic, but quasi-religious. Socialism justifies the self, offers a vision of history, gives meaning and value, separates friends from enemies, gives guidance in perplexities, provides much consolation in time of darkness, illuminates the future, inspires daily action. The greatest threat to the socialist, indeed, is the ex-socialist: hence, the special passion reserved for those in the 1950s disdained as "liberals" and today as "neo-conservatives" (they are identical personae).

Democratic socialism provides so lovely and full an ideal of human behavior, of democracy and justice and truth and brotherliness, that it absorbs psychic territory normally occupied by both political and religious vision. Normally, religion and politics are in some tension. Democratic socialism resolves this tension. It has political and economic ramifications, to be sure, but its real power comes from its "humane ends" and "values and ideals." This is the ultimate reason why, psychologically and intellectually, socialism functions as a religion functions. It is also the reason why socialist thinking suffers from the same liabilities as religious thinking: (1) the problem of reconciling ideals to history; (2) the problem of interpreting a tradition; and (3) the discovery that ideals beautiful and unified in vision are often in practice incompatible.

Thus, to begin with the last first, in the simple vision expressed by Irving Howe of an economy "socially controlled and democratically operated," there is, to the practical mind, at least, a nest of glaring practical contradictions. So long as these words are kept abstract, they evoke lovely images: social control, democratic procedures. The moment one begins to imagine *who, where,* and *how*, enormous conflicts arise. Many persons in their maturity may have rejected socialism on such empirical grounds—as Stuart Hampshire once put it in conversation, speaking about a conference of socialist intellectuals he had attended: "Where did we go wrong? In practice or in theory? Or in both?" But a merely empirical disagreement does not explain the raging controversy of 1968 or 1952 or earlier. The other two sorts of difficulties do.

Critics of Michael Harrington's writings on socialism have frequently remarked that his exegesis of Marx is as painstakingly, as rabbinical, as jesuitical (one uses the word non-pejoratively) as that of any theologian poring over a sacred text. Harrington uncovers the true, deep, and long-hidden intentions of the master. He argues strenuously, and with barely concealed disdain, against those disciples who for so long misinterpreted the master. And when he is finished with his long investigations, lo and behold, Marx stands forth as a classic proponent of American democracy, civil liberties, and humanistic values. At the heart of the mystery lies democracy. Those around *Dissent*, as Irving Howe put it, "made the indissoluble connection between democracy and socialism a crux of their thought." The difficulties of interpreting a tradition, then, are surmountable. One finds in the sacred text and in the holy traditions a very large proportion of what one would like to find.

It is rather around the first mentioned set of difficulties that the real—and, for our purposes, the most relevant—problems arise. The difficulty on which Irving Kristol placed his finger was that of admitting moral self-betrayal. Repentance is never easy. Admission of a serious flaw in one's own judgment is exceedingly difficult for any human being. But for intellectuals such admissions are excruciating. Even years later, and now that the shoe is on the other foot, the sequence of painful steps is clear. Many who were "right" about Vietnam and about Watergate would now like to see those who were "wrong" abase themselves publicly and do public penitence. The retribution of one side against the other is not excessively gentle or forgiving. So also in 1952. Those who wished to be faithful to Marx and to socialism had to take the following steps, and many of them did: (1) They had to admit that the historical vessel in which they had trusted, the Communist Party, was seriously and tragically different from what they had imagined it to be; (2) they had to admit that those they despised most—as philistines, Babbitts, and reactionaries—proved more astute, in this instance, than they; and (3) they had to admit that the tradition they represented—the identification of liberalism with Marx, Communism, and socialism—was no longer innocent. Their

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

position was not unlike that of Roman Catholics explaining to themselves the Renaissance popes and the trial of Galileo.

Consider the reasoning process necessary to meet these difficulties. If it could be shown that other Americans were even more illiberal than they, and even more error-prone, then perhaps their own guilt might not be so keen. In this sense, McCarthyism was a godsend. By estimating that McCarthyism was a greater threat to liberalism than Stalinism, they reaped two advantages. First, their moral self-esteem was protected. Second, the continuity of their opposition to reactionary and mindless opposition—and, indeed, to the larger American public—remained intact. By refusing to confront the problematical nature of their own intellectual tradition, they could hide behind the very liberal and democratic ideals to which Stalinism was so egregiously opposed. They could maintain the fiction of continuity on the left—a continuity of idealism—linking liberalism to socialism, and requiring only that they denounce Stalinism as an unfortunate aberration. In good conscience, they could be both anti-Communist (that is, above all, anti-Stalinist) and also liberal. It is precisely at this point that Kristol affronted them.

Kristol's argument was that their honesty did not go far enough. His accusation was that they did not take their own past with sufficient seriousness. The traditions springing from Marx were far more deeply compromised, both in their essence and in public perception, than the new socialists and the old liberals like Commager allowed. Such persons wished to assert that Stalinism and the "Bolshevik illusion," in Howe's phrase, were wrong, evil, and to be opposed, and yet involved, for all that, only accidental aberrations and, on the part of those Americans who supported them, errors of excessive idealism. It was worse than that, Kristol was saying. The errors both of political and moral vision were substantive.

Lillian Hellman's *Scoundrel Time*, proclaiming her own bravery for precisely the dishonesty and cowardice that Kristol denounced (and which her memoir shows her to know were acts of dishonesty and cowardice, to be handled evasively), shows how difficult admission of radical error is. But the real issue here is independent of personalities. That issue is the judgment to be made today of the tradition of Marxism, even in its democratic socialist variants, as defended, say, by *Dissent*.

Already in 1965, Michael Harrington was referring to Irving Kristol as a "neo-conservative," a name only to rise to prominence a decade later. The true import of the phrase, however, appears to be: "backslider." The one possibility never seriously considered in the democratic socialist tradition is that there may be some—quite vulgar and yet ironically practical—connection between capitalism (specifically, private property) and concrete democratic institutions. The point is never raised. Deep in the mythology of the socialist imagination, capitalism with all its works and pomps is the source of social and personal evil; socialism (or Communism) is the imagination of "humane ends" and creative outcomes. To be morally good is to be a socialist. To be morally evil is to be—well, it must be said—conservative; i.e., not socialist. The true and proper political morality is to stand for an economy "socially controlled and democratically operated" and for "a major redistribution of power and wealth in the U.S.A." One would like to make this the main line of history, and treat everything else as mere appearance. Socialism is a form of metaphysics.

It is also a form of metaphysics that, for various reasons, is less and less compelling. Bluntly put, it doesn't work. The error is not, however, merely an error of the practical order. The error is conceptual. The mistake is a mistake of theory. The socialist hope, that once capitalist institutions have been dismantled human beings will live more closely by the golden rule, underestimates the ingenuity of human selfishness. While a socialist *perspective* sheds light upon many phenomena, as would any fresh perspective, even one known to be unrealistic and merely hypothetical (as when one says, constructing an ideal universe, "Look at it this way for a moment"), socialism as a theory of economics, society, and liberty works best in bookish discussions. The closer one brings it to concretion, the more its concepts shiver into incoherence and break upon the rocks of fact.

Something wholly new is open, therefore, to American intellectuals. Those who are conservative—that is, tied by previous commitments to ideals and traditions rooted in the past—will be unwilling to undertake it and unable to comprehend it. This new task is to create a critique of capitalism—and, particularly, a critique of American society—from a non-socialist position.

What I am proposing, and what Kristol seemed to be dimly suggesting in 1952, is, of course, rank heresy. It is that the turn from Stalinism is not sufficient. It is that socialism is a sort of intellectual mystification, which prevents one from interpreting even one's own experience aright. It is that socialism is one of the idols of the tribe, one of those alluring religious ideals that misdirect the practical mind. One need not, of course, accept such a point of view. But there are two virtues in so doing. First, it would establish a tradition of radical criticism on a fresh and original basis, drawing perhaps on both Anglo-Saxon and socialist sources, but reducible to neither. The American system is in need of accurate criticism, which takes into account the way things actually work here. No theory now available does that. The economic and political presuppositions of democratic *institutions*—as distinct from democratic *ideas*—have by no means been definitively explored, not least in the light of worldwide experiences since World War II. Second, the acceptance of such a point of view by socialists, even in a hypothetical way, would be proof of *bona fides*. To be faithful to a lifelong ideal is no badge of morality, if the ideal is merely inherited.

"Loss of faith"—apostasy—sets in when one no longer believes that the world does, in fact, work the way the socialists desire it to. A reflective person may, for example, conclude from experience that the elimination of private property does not serve democracy, but tyranny; that participatory democracy is an effective check upon authorities at certain levels of social life, but by no means a practical, effective, wise, or even humane way of making most daily decisions; that the "redistribution of wealth" must be guided by differential considerations of many sorts, if it is to be related to the actual diversities of human life, and is by no means to be identified with schemes of equal outcomes and homogenized results; and that national planning is an incoherent attempt to pretend that politics, with its interests and conflicts, can be transcended by the decisions of non-democratic experts.

The debate that began in 1952—and, in fact, even earlier—serves to this day to prevent intellectuals, in New York and elsewhere, from rising above the past. The central debate of our time is not a debate between Irving Howe's "socialism" and Irving Kristol's "conservatism." That is a narrow, nostalgic, an irretrievably dated way of imagining the necessities of intellectual investigation in our time. In order not to repeat again, as we turn toward the 1980s, the policies of the 1960s, and the 1950s, and the 1940s, and the 1930s, it is exceedingly important to imagine the question before us in new and fresh ways. The single way that has not been tried is that of escaping the hold of socialism upon our imaginations. We might cease trusting that the world is divided by good and evil, suitably incarnated in the "humane ends" of socialism and the malign indifference of capitalist profiteers. What a sorry morality play that is, compared to our true plight: which is how to make certain that democratic institutions and opportunity and mobility and rising expectations do not perish from this earth. A Dark Age is threatening. Neither in socialism nor in capitalism, as we have known them, neither on the left nor on the right, neither in the traditions of liberals nor in those of conservatives, is to be found the whole and practical vision we now require. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Theodore Levitt

Corporate Responsibility: Taking Care of Business

Despite the clamor of our so-called "public-interest" advocates, the modern corporation can pursue social responsibility only by sacrificing its own success and our liberty.

Few things characterize man's history so much as his persistent belief that he lives in the worst of times. These are always the times that try men's souls. We never know when we are happy, only when we were happy. So, also, with the world of business.

A listener these days to the sounds that fill the air where businessmen gather would think that instead of getting customers, he who builds a better mousetrap only runs into design difficulties, material shortages, patent-infringement suits, unauthorized work stoppages, collusive bidding, discount discrimination, confiscatory taxes, the Department of Justice, OSHA, EPA, the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, the Toxic Substances Act, HEW, exchange controls, currency fluctuations, environmentalists, the women's movement, and consumerists. It wasn't so long ago that not even the SPCA paid any attention.

Compared to today business is presumed—by both the uninformed public and many younger businessmen—to have operated back in the 1950s more confidently and securely, sure of its traditional expectations, values, and virtues, of consistently expanding opportunities, abundance, and growth, and helped by the widespread acceptance of the principle of merit. Business is thought to have generally been oblivious to the social and economic unevennesses and injustices that were all around; and it is presumed to have felt not the slightest complicity in their creation or perpetuation. It carried on in euphoric bliss, bothered by nobody except, occasionally, the Internal Revenue Service, which was in any case sensibly flexible about what constituted a legitimate business deduction, having been conditioned so by a Congress generous with depletion allowances and other inducements for getting the world's work done.

Presumably, business controlled its internal affairs pretty much without outside intrusion, save for the labor unions who had, certainly by the 1960s, become moderately tractable, and in some cases active partners in fleecing the public. To be sure, there were a few officially regulated industries—interstate transportation, broadcasting, electric utilities, and the like—but the regulators were widely advertised, not entirely without justification, as being in the hip pockets of the regulatees. The Anti-Trust Division of the Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission were, if not quiescent, docile. Occasional ritual sniffs at "concentration" in the steel industry and at the advertising artistry of hemorrhoid-remedy manufacturers confirmed their somnambulism. The SEC hadn't been heard from since William O. Douglas left to put on his judicial robes in 1939. Ralph Nader was a good little schoolboy from Winsted, Conn., sent off later for purification and acculturation in the melting pot of Princeton University. The NAACP had a proper regard for the rules of civility in representing "its people"; environmentalists (not yet so baptized officially) hiked the Appalachian Trail far, far away; judges (men of property to the core) were strictly strict constructionists; and Congressmen did their duty evenhandedly for local veterans' organizations and local industry. Yes, the economy had its ups and downs, but their amplitudes in the last 25 years are remembered largely as having been muted, and their periodicity almost predictable.

There is, of course, some truth in these perceptions, but we always tend to be somewhat hysterical about the worst of our present conditions. Today, many think that for business in the 1950s, it was the good life at the club. Except that business didn't know it was the good life. In 1950, a subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee studying "monopoly power" was making headlines. The Anti-Trust Division of the Justice Department was seeking to break up A&P into seven parts and Western Electric into three, and to make GE sell half of its lamp-producing capacity. The federal courts were loaded with cases and appeals from FTC decisions. The monthly letter of The National City Bank of New York (now Citibank) complained that "critics, little concerned about being consistent, march out in all directions with their criticisms" of business.

In September 1957, the president of the Prudential Insurance Company spoke somberly about "the cruel injustices" of inflation and its "threat to future prosperity." Walter Reuther proposed to do something about it: cut car prices $100 across the board, which, according to his high-powered publicity campaign, the rapacious auto companies could easily afford. Philip Murray was taking his steelworkers out on extended strikes. The recession that started in 1957 helped put Senator Kennedy in the White House, whence he sent the FBI into Pittsburgh one night to persuade Rodger Blough of U.S. Steel to rescind a price increase.

Business isn't what it used to be, and never was. Of course, business has become much more governmentalized these last two decades. This has happened just as some of the old-left intellectuals have renounced their faith in the meliorating possibilities of government, and embraced, now as neo-conservatives, the greater possibilities of the market mechanism. Interventionism has come not from *their* activism, but from entirely different sources.

First, to the Congress itself, we are indebted for great piles of legislation to improve our health, safety, environment, and access to jobs, and to protect us against bad foods, bad medicines, and bad merchants. Meanwhile, the old agencies like the FTC, SEC, FPC, CAB, and FCC have become more feisty (only the ICC remains somnambulant), and the courts more precipitant.

Nor is this all bad. Much of what is now being done by government and to business is widely approved, even by business itself (so long, especially, as it's required mostly of industries other than one's own). Everybody at the Cincinnati Club is for a cleaner, sweeter-smelling river, though the mills and chemical plants upstream scream about unrealistic EPA standards and confiscatory compliance costs. Textile, steel, and electronics companies

---

Theodore Levitt is professor of business administration at Harvard.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

want stronger "anti-dumping" enforcement against overseas importers. Businessmen generally approve of the goals of equal-employment legislation, but attack the arbitrary and bureaucratic enforcement procedures. Offending legislators and regulators are accused of acting punitively or wrongheadedly in the service of admittedly good causes. Those whose oxen are being gored exhibit remarkably opposing conceptions of the public interest.

For business the new legislation, the new controls, and the new intervening judiciary are a very big bother, entailing everywhere enormous new investments, huge new operating costs, and terrible headaches. This situation is reminiscent of the 1930s: The same bother, though with lower costs, attended the flood of New Deal legislation; in ten years time the costs came to be viewed as a normal part of doing business—and business did pretty well.

Still, there is both a quantitative and a qualitative difference between then and now. We have substantially more federal legislation and controls, multiplied redundantly throughout the land by state and local legislation seeking even greater stringency for local conditions. Enforcement agencies and courts are more vigorously active than in the 1930s, when the whole idea of administrative law was relatively new and when there were none of the numerous marauding social activists who these days coalesce behind every issue that surfaces in the public press.

Business today finds that it cannot adapt so easily and smoothly to such massive legislation and regulation. The suddenness and inflexibility of the Environmental Protection Act and of the Occupational Safety and Health Act drove a lot of low-production-volume steel foundries out of business. In the automobile industry, the destruction of independent smaller-suppliers was so extensive that on February 20, 1975, General Motors established a Procurement Policy Group, with particular responsibility to deal with the resulting shortages of steel castings. EPA regulations also drastically reduced the amount of zinc-smelting capacity in the United States—a condition, along with other shortages, which led in many companies to the headquarters centralization of procurement, thus giving the larger corporations a new purchasing edge over the smaller. Similarly, the Clean Air Act of 1970 imposed such heavy research, development, and investment costs on small gasoline and diesel engine manufacturers that only the larger ones with better access to credit and equity markets survived decently. Some vanished altogether.

Yet the most profound changes have come through court action. A purely administrative change in the Federal Rules of Civil Procedures in the mid-1960s precipitated an almost immediate flood of class-action suits. Prior to that, a "class," for judicial purposes, consisted of a group of people who affirmatively acted to belong to that class—say, a group of aggrieved shareholders of a mutual fund who hired a lawyer for recovery of losses on the grounds that the fund's management was negligent or fraudulent. The new rules now defined a class as every shareholder who did not affirmatively *withdraw* from the litigation. A single shareholder of a mutual fund, or a single buyer of an allegedly faulty carburetor, or a single aggrieved minority employee of AT&T claiming systematic discrimination in promotional practices, or a single small-loan-company borrower claiming discrimination or usury, or a single rejected applicant for a home mortgage with a large savings association—any one of these individuals could now seek recovery of alleged prior financial damages in behalf of *all* persons similarly damaged. Instead of five people suing for recovery or damages for themselves, one person could file in behalf of hundreds of thousands.

The money recoverable suddenly skyrocketed from perhaps a few thousand to tens and even hundreds of millions of dollars. Since lawyers often work for percentage fees contingent upon the outcome of such cases, the number of class-action suits quickly jumped in about the same proportion as the expected rewards for legal services. Understandably, this has generated enormous caution among businessmen about almost everything they produce, do, and say.

Nor is it surprising, in light of these developments, that meetings of corporate boards of directors took a dramatic turn. The April 18, 1959, issue of *Business Week* quoted "one of the older directors" of a large U.S. corporation:

> On the day of a...board meeting, the finance committee meets in the morning to pass on recommendations that the board will be asked to adopt....Then "they feed us a heavy lunch, and we go into the board room and they put out all the lights and show the economic position on slides. After all that food sometimes you have trouble staying awake."

Now board members suddenly changed the procedures, took notes furiously, asked unseemly questions of management, talked more about "the interests of the stockholders" and "our liabilities as a corporation and as individuals" and "the reaction of the public." Subsequent SEC requirements for more detailed financial disclosures only confirmed what had already begun to happen.

Talk to different businessmen at different times and you get different answers about what has affected them most. Chemical companies say the Environmental Protection Agency, foundries say OSHA, banks say the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, drug companies say the new HEW rulings on product testing, multinationals say world currency fluctuations, and little retailers say "truth-in-lending" while big retailers say "the rip-off mentality" of consumers and employees. All believe, even when agreeing with the rightness or justice of what they have had to do, that they are the special victims of an anti-business virus sweeping the nation.

Yet despite the new legislation, the new jurisprudence, and the continuing activism against business, it would be a mistake to conclude that America today is suffused with an anti-business fever. It would be a mistake in spite of what seems to be unequivocal supporting data from the Harris polls and the "social indicators" surveys by Daniel Yankelovich and the Opinion Research Corporation. Where there's more smoke there's often less fire. It's just a different kind of fire. Usually a particularly noxious one.

Consider the pollster. He sells a service. Ever entrepreneurial, to sell more he publicizes its results. The more disquieting and bizarre his findings, the more he sells. And the results are always disquieting.

Last spring there appeared a long-winded study called *Consumerism at the Crossroads*. Conducted by Louis Harris and Associates and the Marketing Science Institute, it consisted of 1,510, eighty-minute personal interviews of a "representative national cross-section of adults" and of 500 members of "six leadership groups" in the nation. Examining the results, the authors concluded:

> Americans are greatly concerned about many different kinds of consumer problems. While inflation is their number one concern, they are also deeply troubled by the perceived failure of companies, products, and services. They are worried about poor quality, dangerous products, misleading advertising and labeling, and the apparent lack of concern shown by companies for legitimate consumer interests.

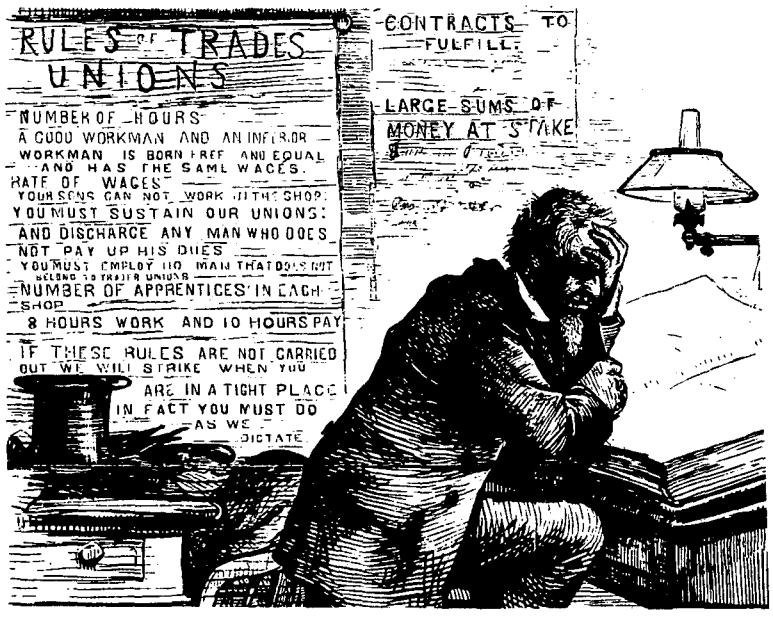
"Deeply troubled," of course, is the key phrase. Yet, on only *two* of the 17 "concerns" they were asked about did more than half the respondents say they "worried a great deal" ("The high prices of many products" and "The high cost of medical and hospital care"). One wonders if there is anybody not suffering from metabolic insufficiency or fiscal excrescence who does not at some time worry at least "somewhat" about most of these issues. The questionnaire invited dyspepsia.

What the report did *not* do was compare these answers with those to its other questions. Take the answers to Question 1. Only eight percent thought "Fighting for consumer interests" a matter of "highest concern and priority for the next [i.e., Carter] administration to do something about." Something is fishy. If people are "deeply troubled" as consumers, why does this issue get only eight percent of the action? The failure of the authors to compare or even to mention the two results in the same breath is instructive. It doesn't make good copy.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The report resolutely avoids making systematic comparisons of the responses to its various questions. Had this been done we would see the inherent distortion of the whole enterprise. Consider Question 22, which asked which of 27 "industries...the consumer movement should give most of its attention to in the future." The results showed business leaders to be almost as much concerned about hospitals as the general public, and substantially *more* concerned about garage mechanics, home builders, and lawyers; evidently, this is because business leaders usually buy more of such services than the rest of the public. Understandably, this makes them less indifferent. But when it comes to buying from big established companies like their own (food manufacturers, car manufacturers), business leaders aren't nearly as concerned about "consumer protection." They know from their own first-hand experience that these companies are pretty reliable and trustworthy. As for the activists, in all cases they confirmed their activism. For example, though only five percent of the business leaders and only 19 percent of the public thought consumerism should look into nuclear power plants, 61 percent of the activists did.

The lopsided differences between the public and the activists help to explain why we have gotten so fast so many new laws and so much more prescriptive regulation of business when the public, though openly invited by pollsters to vent its suspicions, worries, and complaints about business, is remarkably complacent even after all these years of adversary journalism. In both institutions and societies the active minority generally wins out over the inert or indifferent majority. In the United States the active minorities are no longer limited to representatives of traditional business, labor, or farm interests. There is a bunch of new kids—the "public interest" advocates—on the block. Simultaneously, and for other reasons, the old patronage system of ward politics has been replaced by media politics—with the media fighting furiously for their own patronage by catering to the sensational and the outrageous, to the fault-finders and the accusers—so the legislator who wants to stay one must respond to the moralizers who know how to get media attention. Many of the new laws thus represent the rule of multiple, noisy minorities.


RULES OF TRADES UNIONS
NUMBER OF HOURS
A GOOD WORKMAN AND AN INFERIOR WORKMAN IS BORN FREE AND EQUAL AND HAS THE SAME WAGES.
RATE OF WAGES
YOUR SONS CAN NOT WORK IN THE SHOP.
YOU MUST SUSTAIN OUR UNIONS:
AND DISCHARGE ANY MAN WHO DOES NOT PAY UP HIS DUES
YOU MUST EMPLOY NO MAN THAT DOES NOT BELONG TO TRADE UNIONS
NUMBER OF APPRENTICES IN EACH SHOP
8 HOURS WORK AND 10 HOURS PAY
IF THESE RULES ARE NOT CARRIED OUT WE WILL STRIKE WHEN YOU ARE IN A TIGHT PLACE
IN FACT YOU MUST DO AS WE DICTATE
CONTRACTS TO FULFILL
LARGE SUMS OF MONEY AT STAKE

So the claim that there is a pervasive anti-business fever abroad in the land seems highly dubious. What *is* certain is that the anti-business noise is loud, repetitive, transistorized, and highly effective. Americans on the whole are ambivalent, as always; but they are much more satisfied with big business, or with any sized business, than can be inferred from Louis Harris and Associates. All you need to do is watch what they do.

In 1955, with very little else to seize upon, newspapers constantly made headlines out of lengthy congressional hearings airing the complaints of automobile dealers about the demanding and repressive practices of their suppliers, especially General Motors. Letters-to-the-editor columns reflected the public's displeasure at the treatment of these noble small businessmen by the giants on whom they depended, again, especially General Motors. Nevertheless, that year GM sold more cars than ever before. The next year, with the presidential election primaries fueling the fires with reminders of "Engine Charlie" Wilson's spectacular gaffe about "What's good for General Motors is good for the country," GM cornered the largest share of car sales in American history. The public clearly distinguished between what it thought of GM as a public citizen and GM's cars. The public behaves rationally, and spends its money wisely, with its head not its headlines. And when it travels abroad, out of the pollster's earshot, it praises American business as if it belonged to the NAM.

Regarding corporate citizenship, persistent accusations of corporate indifference to social concerns, then and now, come largely from the utopian, the ignorant, and the unwise. That they have traumatized today's business leaders with their high-decibel accusations is certainly true, but while they cry much about social benefaction they also buy much for personal gratification: all that expensive hi-fi equipment, all that costly hiking and camping gear, all that elegantly trashy industrial-look apparel, all those erotically clinging synthetic-fiber swimsuits.

The idea that the modern corporation has social responsibilities actually came from the very depths of Corporate America itself. The first, and still in many ways the most definitive book on management, *The Functions of the Executive*, was published in 1938. One of its 18 chapters is on "The Nature of Executive Responsibility," and it is devoted *entirely* to the subject of morality and responsibility. (1)

In the ten years from 1948 to 1957, the *Harvard Business Review*, which in those days billed itself as "The Magazine of Thoughtful Businessmen," published an average of two-and-a-half articles a year dealing with essentially the same subject of business ethics and social responsibility, including the most famous and influential of all such advocacy pieces, "'Skyhooks' (With Special Implications for Monday Through Friday)," by O.A. Ohmann, an executive of the Standard Oil Company of Ohio. In 1949, Harvard Business School Dean Donald K. David published the influential article, "Business Responsibility in an Uncertain World." In the 1950s, the *Review* published articles (generally authored by persons associated with business) urging business to do more about such social issues as the proper use of natural resources, population control, racial discrimination in business, business opportunities for women, and worker alienation—long before these issues became the fads of the activists, the intellectual classes, and the popular press. (2)

Elsewhere, the idea of socially-responsible business behavior was much in currency, starting with business-sponsored seminars at the University of California and a whole spate of American Management Association colloquia. In 1952, Clarence B. Randall, chairman of Inland Steel, published a widely-read book, *A Creed for Free Enterprise*, which advocated in great detail how to manage business for more socially benign purposes. Ralph J. Cordiner, chairman of General Electric, did much the same in his 1956 book, *New Frontiers for Professional Managers*. And Theodore V. Houser, board chairman of Sears, Roebuck & Co., delivered the 1957 McKinsey Foundation Lecture under the title "Big Business and Human Values." He insisted that business' first responsibility is social, and urged his colleagues to look less to their pocketbooks and more to their spirits.

Clearly, the idea is neither recent nor the invention of business' critics. Nor is the idea very well-defined. What exactly is "socially responsible" business behavior anyway? In 1973, Professor

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Raymond A. Bauer and Rikk Larson released a paper on "Trends in Public Expectations of Business." It showed the public's responses in 1966, 1971, and 1972 to a list of 16 problems "businessmen and companies should give some leadership to." Among the problems were "Controlling air and water pollution," "Rebuilding our cities," "Enabling people to use their creative talents fully," "Giving a college education to all qualified," "Eliminating religious prejudice," "Controlling crime," "Raising moral standards," "Reducing threat of war," and "Eliminating racial discrimination." In 1966, five of the 16 questions received 70 percent or more positive responses; in 1971, nine did; in 1972, twelve. Is taking action on this basis what "social responsibility" means? On which of the 16 problems should a corporate chief executive, from whom stockholders, pensioners, and employees still expect checks, have spent corporate money in 1966? Which in 1972? How much money, time, and for how many problems simultaneously? (3)

In 1972, the Battelle Seattle Research Center published "Social Pressure and Business Actions." It included a list of "Social Demands and Pressures on Business in Different Subject Areas" —environment, consumer, and anti-trust. Environment got a 25 percent response in 1965, 20 percent in 1967, 19 percent in 1969, 42 percent in 1970, and 58 percent in 1971. Should business have done less about the environment in 1969 than in 1965, only to have faced a steep demand for more the next year? Consumer issues got a 22 percent response in 1965, 53 percent in 1967, 52 percent in 1969, 31 percent in 1970, and 21 percent in 1971. Should a corporation have done less in 1970 than in 1969, and even less in 1971?

It is, then, extremely difficult to decide which social problems should be addressed, to define what constitutes "the public interest." Even if that could be done, however, the structure of the modern corporation itself poses obstacles to effective socially-responsible business action. Professor Robert W. Ackerman of MIT has made a career of studying this problem. In a 1974 article on "Putting Social Concerns Into Practice," he cites the case of the president of a $2 billion American corporation who sought to do something about the effects of its activities on the environment. Four difficulties quickly surfaced. First, the new pollution-control technologies required expertise that was not available in the company. Though the legal staff might be able to monitor the rapidly changing regulations, it was in no position to make recommendations involving technical, financial, or operating decisions. Who would? Second, who was to implement the chief executive's wishes? The company had a dozen autonomous operating divisions, each responsible for its own performance and normally responsible for proposing the plans for its own future. Should the disciplines and operating efficiencies this system had fostered now be compromised by top-down directives on capital spending for pollution equipment, facilities location, and product-line policy (such as the use of recycled or degradable materials)? Third, how was the chief executive to know where the problem areas lay in the organization, what progress was being made to solve them, and how much this would cost? There were no systematic means for generating these data, and nobody outside the company knew how to do it. Finally, if the division managers were to focus attention on environmental issues, how would this affect their commitment to conventional performance measures, and how should their performance now be audited and measured? (4)

These are not unique problems. Nearly 80 percent of *Fortune* magazine's list of the 500 largest American manufacturing firms are organized on a decentralized division basis. That is the secret of their success, a "secret" first instituted at General Motors by Alfred P. Sloan, Jr., when he came over from DuPont in 1923 to rescue a company in shambles. Further, since we measure a company's success by its ability profitably to attract and hold solvent customers (who are generally prudent with their hard-earned cash), with how much confidence can we expect or should we ask the chief executive to dictate a different tune to his subordinates?

Nor is it entirely clear that the idea of socially-responsible business behavior is itself a socially-desirable idea. The established corporation has the unique power to create its own capital. It does so by offering goods and services people will want to buy from *it* rather than from somebody else—and doing so at a level of profit that will enable the enterprise to survive and keep its jobs secure. Because people know their money is hard to get, scarce, and transient, they buy from whoever offers the cheapest combination of what they want, regardless of the seller's social behavior. That's rational. But what constitutes socially-responsible business behavior in any given circumstances is not rationally determinable. Most commonly, it is determined through the lens of our special interests, experiences, knowledge, personal values, and ideologies. Honest people, with no thought of personal advantage or special claim to truth, honestly disagree. In many matters business leaders see things quite differently than do consumer activists or "the public." How desirable is it to have people who are in control of large pools of internally-generated capital, who have come up the hard way through the ranks as business achievers, and who often know very little else but business itself spend that capital on what *they* believe is socially desirable? (5)

If corporations come to believe that their long-run interests are served by their behaving, in some encompassing sense, socially responsibly—if they believe that what they are asked to do, and have tried for so long but with unpromising results to do, is not charity but in their own self-interest—then that much the worse. For if that is so, it puts much more apparent justification and impulse behind activities which are essentially bad for man, bad for society, and ultimately bad for the corporation itself. Well-intended though it may be, the persistent demand for socially-responsible behavior is a dangerous call to convert the corporation, managed by persons educated in little else but business, into the 20th-century equivalent of the medieval Church, ministering to the whole of man and molding him and society in the image of the corporation's essentially and necessarily narrow ambitions and needs. And the modern corporation will do a much more effective and efficient job than the Church: shades of the Corporate State. The danger is not that government will run business, or that business will run government, but rather that the two will coalesce into a single power, unopposed and unopposable.

Of course, this is not an imminent danger. Business still resists with all the inertia it commands much of what the "reformers" ask. But one goes too far to accuse it of Brobdingnagian insularity, insensitivity, or indifference. It is one thing to be a decent and good citizen, to expect of our institutions some civility, restraint, responsiveness, and good taste. It is quite another to seek by ever-expanding legislation, administration, and social pressure an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

unattainable goodness, an elimination of conflicts of interest, and in the process to risk destroying the pluralism that guarantees our liberties. The critics of business (and even some of its practitioners) want their own kind of utopian perfection without understanding the difficulties or considering the price. If they saw that the price might include their own freedom, not just the companies' money, they might for once stop to think. □

1. The author was Chester I. Barnard, president of the New Jersey Bell Telephone Company, and he wrote it himself, with the acknowledged encouragement of Dean Wallace B. Donham of the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration.

2. "The Raw Materials Outlook" appeared in 1952, and "Population & Technology," in 1957. In 1961, three years before "Bull" Connor put down the Birmingham civil-rights marches with fire hoses, snarling dogs, and cattle prods, and long before "Black" had replaced "Negro," the *Review* published Henry Allan Bullock's influential articles on "Consumer Motivations in Black and White." Articles advocating "Opportunities for Women at the Administrative Level" appeared as early as 1953. The concept of "blue collar blues" was anticipated in a 1952 article on "Man on the Assembly Line." Advice on "Management of Voluntary Welfare Agencies" appeared in 1964.

3. Socially responsible big-business behavior requires a publicly-owned corporation to spend money for non-corporate purposes. It is useful to know that not until a 1935 amendment to the Internal Revenue Code could corporations deduct pre-tax income for charitable contributions. It was not until the 1953 landmark A.P. Smith case that the New Jersey Superior Court upheld the right under common law of a manufacturing company to contribute funds to Princeton University. The same applied to donations to help improve community education, health, recreation, and cultural facilities.

4. In 1973, John Humble, director of the international consulting firm, Urwick Orr & Partners Ltd., described in detail how an organization might conduct a continuing audit of how it performs its social responsibilities (*Social Responsibility Audit: A Management Tool for Survival*). The audit would be the social equivalent of an annual profit and loss statement. It is a highly complex document, offered "as a start," which did not itself define or describe "social responsibility." And before his death last summer, Professor Bauer and his colleague Dan H. Fenn, Jr., who spent years on the subject and wrote a book on *The Corporate Social Audit* (1972), were not yet ready to prescribe what a workable social audit should look like.

5. Nor do *mitbestimung* in Germany, employee cooperatives in Sweden, or nationalization in Britain (to mention only democratic nations) provide any reassurance that those who run the enterprise will act in the best interests of the public.

James Grant

"Just A Newspaper Stiff"

The art of Red Smith is half a century old and counting, and though life as a sportswriter is filled with temptation, Smith retains his innocence.

Some of the rashest words provoked by the trade of Tom Seaver to the Cincinnati Reds last summer were those of Jimmy Breslin, columnist for the New York *News*. Breslin called the pitcher a hero to a heroless city, ornament of the borough of Queens, and thus the most important man in all New York. He added that writing newspaper stories about Seaver was the lowest calling in town, a brave claim which, if it stands at all, stands on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday.

Those are the days on which Red Smith, who writes about pitchers, horses, and prize-fighters for a living, does not grace the pages of the *New York Times*. Four days out of seven, however, Jimmy Breslin is kidding himself. The hero is the writer; batted balls and galloping steeds are the props of Smith's stage. The freezing ennui of the 1976 World Series was transformed by a sentence of Smith's: "Looking like something that had been in the water for days and days, the Yankees went down for the fourth time last night." When Evel Knievel announced last Christmas that he intended to soar above a pool of man-eating sharks in the glare of prime-time television, Smith made order of the chaos:

> The refined and discriminating taste of the American television viewer has been the subject of more than one treatise by students of behavioral science. It accounts for the enduring success of such classics as "Twilight Zone," "As The World Turns," "Guiding Light," and many others. A milestone in theatrical history was passed a couple of summers ago when thousands bought tickets for a closed-circuit TV show on the promise that if all went well, they would see Evel Knievel disemboweled on the rocks at the bottom of the Snake River Canyon. That entertainment was a failure.

James Grant is an associate editor of Barron's Financial Weekly. *Joseph P. Duggan lent a hand in the research for this article in St. Louis.*

The art of Red Smith is half a century old and counting. Full of years and honors, Smith still writes 3,000 words a week and says he would just as soon write 4,000. The seasons still lead him from diamond to stream to gridiron, and none of it bores him. The words still arrange themselves on the page in perfect grace. Though a life in newspapers is filled with temptation—press agentry, bad fiction, and, at last, social security—Smith retains his innocence. (It is true that Smith once wrote society paragraphs for the Chase Hotel in St. Louis for the price of a hotel room, but that was in the Great Depression, a hungrier and more permissive era.) "All I ever wanted to be," he told the Pulitzer Prize people a couple of years ago, "was a newspaper stiff."

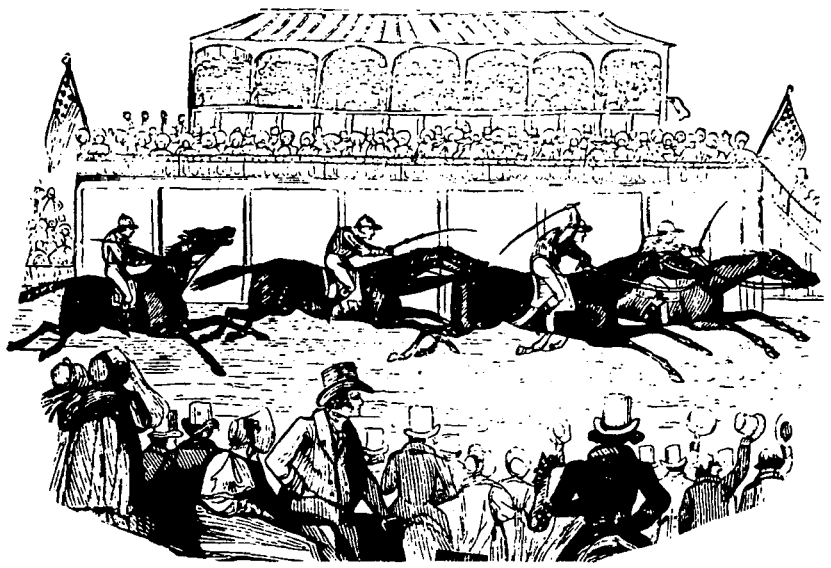
Nowadays, Smith is a stiff-squire. He summers in Martha's Vineyard, where he watches the Red Sox on TV, and maintains a year-around residence in New Canaan, a fashionable community even now beyond the financial reach of many major-league ball players. Smith's office in Connecticut is in a converted barn, set back from a winding, narrow road much frequented by Mercedes Benzes, and a white clapboard house, where he lives with his wife, Phyllis. The office is furnished with plumbing, books, and pictures of men and horses. Yogi Berra loiters in pen and ink and huntsmen harass a fox on the wall above Smith's typewriter, an Olympia manual. A pair of drumsticks lies on a table (Smith isn't sure where he got them); the air smells of books and summer. Here Smith writes his columns, including the headlines, and phones them in to a tape recorder at the *Times*. Western Union, he maintains, is incompetent with any message longer than ten words that doesn't end in "love." Through the *Times* News Service, Smith's column is syndicated to more than 400 papers around the world. These do not include *Women's Wear Daily*, which carried his stuff in the late sixties, between the demise of the *New York*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Herald-Tribune and his joining the *Times* in 1971, and for which he endured much rough derision at the hands of his colleagues.

When I met Smith, he was dressed in khaki pants, brown loafers, and blue button-down shirt. He was reading Roger Angell's latest collection of baseball pieces, in which was inscribed, "For Red Smith, my favorite..." but the rest of the message was lost from view. Smith's brow was lined and his head thatched white. There was a slight tremor in his hands. To his small frame, assiduously unattended over the years, age has added few pounds. He wore black horn-rim glasses. The face suggested the Ivy League, but the air of professorship dissolved with his laughter.

To hear Smith himself tell it, no man cuts a less probable figure in sports. "As a small boy," he recalls, "I was always the littlest kid, four-eyed from the first grade on. I was no account athletically." Learned in all sports, Smith never earned a varsity letter and last sat atop a horse in 1946. He played two or three rounds of golf, years ago, to humor his son, Terence (now assistant foreign editor of the *Times* and one of the paper's most shot-at foreign correspondents), and claims that he could swing at the ball and find it lying behind him. He says that he gave up tennis after losing repeatedly to a girl. "I hated my gym instructor in my freshman year at Notre Dame," Smith reflects. "I think the man's name was Cox, a senior who ran on the track team. I don't know why I hated his guts, maybe because he had the bearing of a drill sergeant. I discovered in high school that I couldn't run fast, so I decided to run long. To get away from Cox, I signed up as a miler and finished last in the only race I ever ran."



As man of letters, Smith's training was broader, though still outside the classical tradition. "I had two years of high-school French," he recalls. "I rather enjoyed it, although was never very good at it. Then I decided to branch out into Spanish. I flunked one semester and quit. I don't think I have any gift of tongues," he continued. "I've never had any Latin or Greek, and I deplore that. In the early days of television, there was a fine quiz show on the air. The panelists were given a word and they'd have to trace it back to its roots. One guy, who seemed to be a real dees, dems, and does kind of character, was just great at it. I really enjoyed that show and envied them so." Among Smith's literary heroes is E.B. White, whose work he calls an "unbroken crystal stream." Smith marvels that White wrote simply even as a sentimental youth (a fact apparent in his published letters, which Smith devoured). Like White, Smith has never written a full-length book from scratch. "Once a publisher asked me out to lunch," Smith recalls. "He proposed that I write a book—a book on anything. I was so flattered that a real live publisher had asked me to write a book between covers that I said yes. I was all set to sign the contract when it dawned on me that this involved sitting down and writing an extra 90,000 or 100,000 words. I sent the contract back, and told him that I couldn't do it."

At the age of 72, Smith does nearly everything but retire. Two years ago, when he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize, the world took note of his years and marvelled. Even before the announcement, other honors committees were speculating on his mortality, more or less discreetly, sometimes leaving it to Smith to quash the rumors of his own impending retirement. ("Smith," wrote a University of Missouri committeeman, in a wonderful turn of phrase two autumns ago, "is expected to retire soon and lock up his coveted typewriter for good.") But Smith does not oblige. "My feeling," he says now, "is that I'll keep on going as long as I enjoy it, or until someone I respect says, look, give it up, you're losing the hop on your fast one."

As it happens, Dick Young of the *News* suggested just that at the height of the Seaver controversy, saying that Smith is the "pitiable shell of a once-great writer." But Smith calls Young a "malicious son of a bitch," and so his words occasioned no introspection. Smith does complain that his memory isn't what it used to be—"I can't remember a column more than 24 hours after I've written it," he says—but it still serves ably. On an interview, he says, he listens for a turn of phrase. He jots down names and numbers and remembers the rest until he gets home. More and more, Smith seems to write of the past, of the death of friends, and of games long forgotten. But this is the right of age. Smith's friends *are* dying, and the past for him is something alive. At the time of the Ali-Inoki rassling-boxing carnival, while young men wrote earnestly of the here and now, Smith favored his readers with an item of history: "'"Perhaps it is some atavistic instinct in me," Jimmy Londos said today. "I don't regard myself as a cruel man, and yet I love to hear an opponent's bones crack."' That was the lead of a story on the sports page of a New York daily 45 years ago...." Smith prefers, as he always has, labor to capital, and holds Bowie Kuhn in the same perfect scorn as he held a previous incumbent of the baseball commissioner's office, A.B. (Happy) Chandler. A liberal in politics—"I've spent most of my life voting against Richard Nixon"—Smith, in matters of sport, is an Old Whig, conserving here and improving there, friend alike of real grass and free agents. "I care less and less for adjectives," he remarked not long ago, suggesting that time is on the side of the writer.

Walter Wellesley ("I hate the name" is customarily inserted here, but Smith says he doesn't hate the name at all) Smith was born in Green Bay, Wis., on September 25, 1905. His great grandfather, John M. Smith, came to Green Bay from Morristown, N.J., before the Civil War, and made a name for himself as a horticulturist. "At first he was a timber scaler," Smith relates. "He was the guy who could look at a forest and tell you how many board feet were in it. Never made much money at it, though. He cleared a cedar swamp in the northeast corner of town and started a wholesale vegetable business. He grew vegetables in hotbeds—would force them up early and sell throughout northern Wisconsin and the Michigan peninsula. He gave away celery to promote celery eating and got a dollar apiece for cantelope, but didn't make much money at that, either. He trusted people too much. Then the firm became John M. Smith Sons, when my grandfather took it over, and finally Smith Brothers Co., which went broke in the Depression. I never had any remote interest in going into the business. Later in life, I learned that my father despised it, too—he did it out of duty."

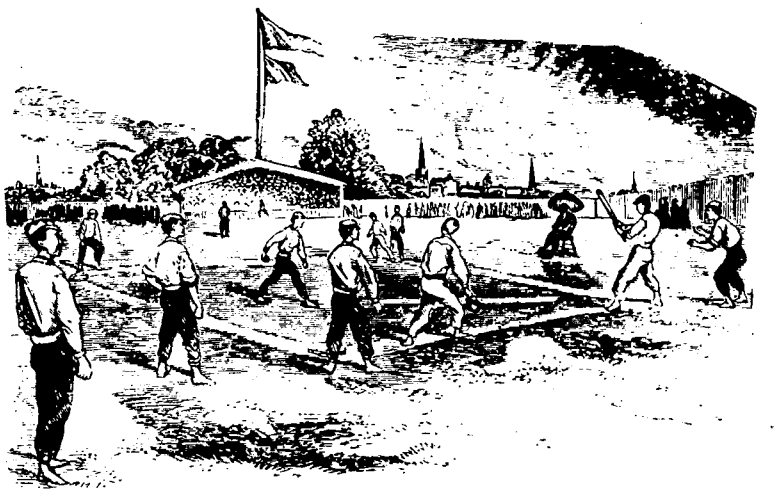
Smith was raised a Catholic. This was his mother's wish and his father, who wasn't a Catholic, acceded gladly, insisting only that Walter attend public schools. Smith had a sister, who died of tuberculosis when he was 19, and a brother, Art, an itinerant newspaperman, who died early this year. "He was light of heart and light of foot," Smith wrote of Art in a column after his death, "and he would quit a job to go to the circus." As a boy, Smith found a hero in one Vincent Engels, a Notre Dame journalism

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

student and angler who showed him how to fish with flies and, by his own example, suggested a livelihood that did not involve the lifting of heavy objects.

Treading the path of Engels, Smith entered Notre Dame and enrolled in journalism, having already copped first prize in his high-school essay contest with, as he recalls, "a witty description of the East High debating team." (The specimen evidently does not survive; Smith saves almost nothing, including, until very recently, his own columns. He did keep, however, a note from Branch Rickey, the peerless baseball executive, which ended with this PS: "You understand me better than most, perhaps.") "They had something called the *Notre Dame Daily*," Smith recalls. "That was a misnomer because it came out irregularly, and it finally folded at the end of my freshman year. I was a reporter for it but a lousy one. I had a miserable beat, and I didn't do any work." Posterity might well discount that confession, for in his junior year, Smith was elected editor of the *Dome*, the university annual.

Upon graduation in 1927, he got a job at the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, for $25 a week, working whatever story the city desk was pleased to send him on. The next year he jumped to the *St. Louis Star*, for $40 a week. "I started on local, went to sports, got bored, and went back to the city desk," Smith recalls. "I never had any notion of being a sportswriter. I wanted to be a newspaperman. When I went to Philadelphia in 1936, I told the managing editor that I'd do either, sports or local. As it happened, I went to sports and never left, except for covering the presidential conventions in 1956 and 1968. I had a fine time in 1956, and the *Herald-Tribune* asked me if I wanted to cover politics permanently. But I turned them down. I'd had so much invested in sports by that point—you know, I knew the way to the Yankee dugout without asking directions—that I couldn't give it up." Then, as now, Smith wasted few tears on the vanquished. "Ten minutes after the fight," he wrote in 1961, "they scraped Ingemar Johansson off the floor, propped him up on a stool, bundled him up like a sore thumb, and nudged him gingerly on his first step on the long road back to Göteborg." At the 1956 Democratic National Convention, Smith had written in a similar vein of former President Harry Truman and his ill-fated opposition to the nomination of Adlai Stevenson.



"The old champ looked fit," Smith said on the front page, "square of shoulder and springy of tread, his skin clear, his eyes bright behind the glittering glasses." But what of the legs? "Toward the end he seemed impatient for the final bell. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'I think that is enough,' and he lifted his hands. Somehow, one was reminded of Abe Attell as an old man fighting a kid in St. Louis. A few fast rounds, and then Abe turned to the crowd. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'I am Abe Attell, featherweight champion of the world. I have always given you a good show. This is as far as I can go.' The old champ had come in briskly. Now he went out slowly. They never come back." Smith's foray into politics nearly produced the story of the decade, scotched only by a jail warden's better instincts. In San Francisco, at the 1956 Republican convention, Smith and Art Buchwald proposed that they interview "Machinegun Kelly" at his home in Alcatraz. Prison management, however, rightly suspecting the pair dangerous, vetoed the idea.

In St. Louis, Smith worked for Frank Taylor, a managing editor steeped in the legends of Ben Hecht. "Taylor," Smith says, "was one of those guys who'd read all about how managing editors are supposed to act—very gruff, tossing off assignments as they came into his head. He'd just come across a feature about some place called Old Mines, Mo., in the foothills of the Ozarks. It was an old tiff-mining district, and the first hard road had just come in. The place was settled by the French about the same time that St. Louis was settled, and you could still hear French spoken there. Taylor wanted me to find someone who'd never seen the city and bring him back to St. Louis to record his reactions."

Thus Smith and his first wife (the former Catherine Cody, of St. Louis, who died in 1967) set out by flivver to Old Mines. A strike was in progress, and Smith stopped by union headquarters to ask directions to the wilderness. He was pointed to Calico Creek Hollow and advised to look up Mrs. Mary Susan Coleman Tigert, who proved the incarnation of Taylor's richest dreams. "She was sitting out on the porch," Smith relates, "smoking a corn cob pipe, wearing a black sunbonnet, living with her husband, and a rather new husband, in a shack. They were living on relief, drying their own tobacco. She had never seen a car, a telephone, an electric light, anything of the kind. She was immediately attracted to Kay, my wife, and she agreed to return with us to civilization. She asked whether she could see the Big Creek, meaning the Mississippi River. That was what she really wanted."

On September 2, 1935, the *Star-Times* (successor to the *Star*) ran the first of a series of articles by Walter W. Smith—his byline until he went to Philadelphia—under this bank of headlines: Woman, 73, Never Saw a Train, Lives only 70 Miles from St. Louis; World of Movies, Radios and Airplanes Unknown to Ozark Dweller—Her Chief Interest in the 'Outside' World is to See the Mississippi." Smith wrote as follows:

> Fletcher, Mo. Sept. 2—In the deep quiet of Calico Creek Hollow, at the end of a flinty Ozark Trail that meanders three miles through the woods from this quiet cross roads post office, the writer of this article has discovered a woman 73 years old who in her entire life has never seen a railroad train, gas stove, street car, movie, taxicab, sewing machine, airplane, hotel, vacuum sweeper, department store, lamp post, traffic cop, apartment house, boat or dentist; never has heard a radio; never ridden in an elevator; never worn street clothes, chewed gum, eaten in a restaurant or talked over a telephone.

The series delighted St. Louis but failed to impress O.K. Bovard, managing editor of the rival *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. Actually, according to surviving witnesses, very little impressed Bovard. The more audacious Taylor's stories, the more stubbornly Bovard refused to credit them. He was not a maudlin man. "One time Bovard had fired a reporter and the guy came back the next day to cop a plea," Bob Burnes, sports editor of the *Post-Dispatch*, relates. "The guy begged Bovard to give him back his job, nearly got down on his knees. Bovard just kept on reading copy. In desperation, the guy blurted out, 'But Mr. Bovard, I've got to eat.' 'Not necessarily,' Bovard said."

Smith had applied to the *Post-Dispatch* on the invitation of Ed Wray, sports editor, but Bovard wouldn't hear of it. "Bovard said the story was a movie scenario and that I was a faker," Smith says, still indignant (and embarrassed, for Taylor had ordered him to use the words "the writer of this article," which appeared throughout). "This was important, because the *Post* was the only paper in town that paid real money." While negotiations with Wray were underway, Smith received a cable from the *Philadel-*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

phia Record, offering him a job. "I turned it down," Smith says, "because Kay was a St. Louis girl, and I didn't want to leave town. But I couldn't fight my way past Bovard, and I got the *Record* to renew its offer."

During his St. Louis days, when he worked too hard and stayed out too late, Smith's immediate boss at the *Star*, Sid Keener, personally roused him and drove him to work in the morning. Smith pleads guilty to another foible in those years—that of overwriting. When I went to see him in New Canaan, I brought a copy of a story he had written in June 1932, when he was covering the St. Louis Browns. It carried a Philadelphia dateline and began this way: "Twenty-two sleepless ballplayers opened leaden-lidded eyes this morning in this, the home of Ben Franklin, Mr. Max Boo-Boo Hoff and alley beer, and watched dawn curdle a sky from which shone little promise of better days to come." Smith shook his head. "Alley beer," he murmured. "Too much," he said a moment later. " 'Leaden-lidded' is too much. I remember how I used to reach way out for a lead, a new figure of speech, anything to set off what I was writing that day from what I'd done the day before. I had to do it differently. The older I get, the more I admire the simple declarative sentence. It's a wonderful thing."

"I loved football when I was in Philadelphia," Smith said. "I'd cover a Villanova game Friday night, Penn on Saturday, and the pros on Sunday. I'd gallop out and write about the high school championships because I didn't want the season to end. I got a letter a while ago from a guy who used to play halfback for a high-school team and he enclosed a story that I'd written about him. I had all these shapeless troglodytes struggling in the primeval mud. It was just awful."

For years, Smith has explained his success by protesting that writing a column is the easiest thing in the world: "I just open a vein and let it bleed out," he says, "drop by drop."

"At the *Star*, when I was on rewrite, I was fast because I had to be fast. There were so few people on the staff, I sat at a smoking typewriter for twelve hours a day. I became slower and slower when I started writing a column. That's a more personal thing. In Philadelphia, I wrote seven a week, at the *Trib* I started with six and later cut down to five. In those days I hardly ever got a day off, but I was younger then and I loved it."

"Some people write a fast draft and then rewrite. I blacksmith it out paragraph by paragraph on the typewriter. I rarely sit down and write a column on four pieces of paper. Someone asked me how long it takes me to write, and I said I use all the time I have. I'm unhappy if I don't have at least two hours at the typewriter, although I've done it in as little as 35 minutes. Years ago, I realized that I wasn't a fast writer. And I realized then that I wasn't going to get any faster."

Sam Muchnick, a St. Louis wrestling promoter who worked on the *Times* when Smith was on the *Star*, recalls a column written in the back seat of his Pontiac, between Louisville, Ky., and Terre Haute, Ind., a distance of under 200 miles. "The year was 1970," Muchnick says, "because Dust Commander had won the Derby. Red was there to cover the race, and he had to be in St. Louis the next day for a speech. I was going to the Derby, too, so I offered to drive him and his wife, Phyllis, to St. Louis. He rigged up a table in the back seat for his typewriter, and Phyllis sat up front with me. When we got to Terre Haute, he dropped off the copy at the Western Union office. A few days later, when I looked in the back seat, I found about twenty crumpled up pieces of paper, leads that Smith had tried then ripped up because he didn't like them."

I asked Muchnick if he thought Smith's copy was losing any of its edge. "He's what you call a picture-book writer," Muchnick said. He paused judiciously. "Actually, I think he's getting better."

Jet planes, arc lights, and the other icons of progress have made sports writing a less civilized calling. Whereas baseball writers once traveled regally, in smoking cars, filing their copy at leisure, they nowadays are hurtled through the skies from one lighted stadium to the next. Deadlines come earlier, games run later, and Smith rarely gets to the ballpark, on business or pleasure. "My first wife, Kay, was a Cardinals fan," said Smith, as the talk turned to busmen's holidays. "She adored Stan Musial and we went to see him whenever we could. One night, there was a big silvery moon hanging over right field. Musial hit two home runs into that moon, and the Cardinals won the game, by, I think, two to one. As we got up to leave, Kay turned to me and said, 'I'm the luckiest girl in the world.' " □

Tom Bethell

Capitol Ideas

On magazines, metrics, "mental illness," and moralism.

My first encounter with *The Alternative: An American Spectator* was in the New Orleans Public Library, and my initial reaction was: How did this get past the "censor"? I then realized—as indeed I had been vaguely aware—that public discourse is usually governed by tacitly agreed-upon ground rules; for example, while it is okay to be a conservative, and it is okay to be a liberal, it is *not* okay to make fun of liberals. That is definitely a "foul." And here was a magazine I had not heard of cheerfully violating this taboo. The last time I had seen anything like it in American journalism was in the early to mid-1960s, when the *Realist* made great sport of conservative attitudes. (Alas, with the advent of the Drug Era a decade ago, the *Realist* too went to pot.)

Tom Bethell is Washington editor for Harper's *and contributing editor of the* Washington Monthly.

In a recent issue of *National Review*, Lewis Lapham, the editor of *Harper's*, remarked that though journalists are forever bemoaning the absence of H.L. Mencken, if he were in our midst he would undoubtedly go so much against the grain that he might find it hard to get published. For example, Lapham suggested, Mencken today might say "that blacks (i.e., 'Moors') do not think as well as whites, that homosexuality constitutes a mental disorder rather than a political choice, that women, no matter how well-meaning or enraged, simply cannot make art, government, or law."

Lapham has a point. We need to remind ourselves today that Mencken's targets—Babbittry, the rude American cheerfully ignorant of European refinement—have become, 50 years later, the very centerpiece of received wisdom among the intelligentsia, in academe and the press. That is why academics and journalists

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

puff on their pipes and complacently bestow so many posthumous encomia upon Mencken. They are congratulating themselves.

To carry on in "the Mencken tradition" really means placing oneself in opposition to the conventional wisdom, which today, if anything, entails supporting some of the "small-town values" that Mencken attacked. The best evidence I have that *The American Spectator* is doing this is in the following: *The American Spectator* is published in Bloomington, home of Indiana University; but, contrary to what one might expect, a good many of the local profs regard the presence of this rag on their home turf as a source of intellectual embarrassment. When editor Tyrrell told me that, I knew he had to be doing something right, and I knew that my initial reaction in New Orleans had been accurate: *The American Spectator* was in gross violation of the current intellectual code.

May I ask why this metric nonsense is being foisted upon us? It emanates, of course, from a hitherto improperly identified public nuisance which lurks continually in the shadows, evading the searchlights of criticism: the Change Lobby. There is a host of people who not only love to change things about as frequently as possible but whose incomes and pensions depend on our permanent acquiescence in this turmoil. Unfortunately, this acquiescence is all too easily obtained from traditionalists who too often concede the day. By contrast, Change Lobby people are usually serenely confident that they know best and that if only they are permitted to overcome the inertia of our ignorance, Progress will prevail and Utopia will not be far behind.

I have heard many times the argument about metric-calibrated machine-tools being so essential in an era of international comity. Very well then. Have metric tools. But how does one leap from this to the demand that the Celsius temperature scale replace the Fahrenheit? I have never once heard this explained. For heaven's sake, why can't somebody stand up for once and say, "We're not going to change, but the French are welcome to do so if they wish." I suppose that would be too cruel, or piggish, or racist, or imperialist.

The Fahrenheit scale is clearly superior to the Celsius. For example, in Washington this year the highest and lowest recorded temperatures have been 100°F and 2°F. Thus we have a scale which conveniently divides the temperature encountered over most of the U.S. most of the time into units from zero to 100. That is an intelligently devised scale. But the Celsius scale is less finely tuned. One day last winter I noticed a bank sign giving the temperature in both scales as follows: 40°F, 4°C. Forty equals four, I thought. On my way home it was: 39°F, 4°C. Clearly the Fahrenheit is a more discriminating one.

But no matter. The Change Lobby will undoubtedly prevail in this as in many other things, because (above all) so many people in this country have a naive faith that change must be informed by wisdom (otherwise, why would it have been proposed?). This fails to take into account the vested interest of the Change Lobby. "Innovative education," for example, no matter how much it is discredited, will always tend to appeal to those bureaucrats who sponge off popular gullibility about education because it employs more of them. Blackboard, chalk, and heavy ruler need only a schoolma'am. Audio-visual hardware and other gimmicks need money, create jobs for budget directors and assistant regional administrators.

The consolation is that, in a personal way, one can resist much Change Lobby lunacy. I have bought Fahrenheit thermometers for inside and outside use, and I *shall not* learn the conversion. I *shall not* think metric. In the same way, it gives me the keenest possible pleasure to know that I *shall not* voluntarily read a new translation of the Bible, I *shall not* open a book by Jean-Paul Sartre, nor shall I learn the New Math, or listen to twelve-tone music, or read a treatise on psychological development. Let others who have more time at their disposal offer themselves up as guinea pigs for these experiments upon our crania. New things and new ideas deserve a rough reception, and if they can't withstand this treatment they are not worthy of our time.

It seems that whenever a crime is committed nowadays the accused criminal is sent straight from the police station to a psychiatrist's office. The theory behind this is that before bringing such a person to trial, thus risking bringing down the dread verdict of "guilty" upon his head, every attempt should be made to exonerate the wretch by ascribing his actions to something beyond his control. This is our way of exorcising the demon of wickedness, which, according to the ethos of our time, does not exist in individuals—only in groups (for example, society itself is apt to be wicked, as is the Caucasian race).

These reflections are prompted by the latest hilarious developments in the William Sibert case. Sibert, you may recall, is the GS-5 employee accused of embezzling $850,000 from the government, then going on a spending spree conspicuous enough to lead to his capture. After his arrest, in the modern fashion, Sibert was released as soon as he had made the ritual expressions of sorrow, penitence, and eagerness to cooperate with the authorities (by revealing where the money was) that were expected of him.

Sibert was supposed to stay home with his parents. But he broke his promise, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office. He left home within 24 hours and took up residence in a Holiday Inn, "where he has thus far paid $450 in cash for a room for himself and his wife." Sibert apparently has a thing about cars. Before his arrest he bought himself a round dozen of luxury sedans. Now he has gone out and bought himself a couple more—a Pontiac station wagon and a Ford Thunderbird.

The authorities are not at all sure they know where the original money went. For instance, Sibert "accounted" for some of it by

"The American Spectator is a consistently interesting, thoughtful, and lively magazine. It manages to maintain a firm commitment to individualism and freedom without being doctrinaire, boring, or doleful."

—*Milton Friedman*

Join the thousands of thoughtful Americans who read *The American Spectator*—the magazine *Time* magazine has called "one of the nation's most energetic and sprightly journals of opinion." To start receiving your copy of *The American Spectator*, use this handy order form and subscribe now.

Please check the appropriate boxes and mail this form to:
The American Spectator, Subscription Department,
P.O. Box 877, Bloomington, Indiana 47401

PLEASE PRINT

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____
X71

☐ New subscription
☐ Renewal
☐ One year (10 issues) $10
☐ Two years $18
☐ Three years $25
☐ Payment enclosed
☐ Please bill me

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

saying he lost $30,000 cash in a poker game. But he can't remember who with. Meanwhile he just keeps on spending more and more money. This is too much, so he is taken before the magistrate *again*, and released *again* on the same unsecured bond, but this time—you guessed it—he must see a psychiatrist for "screening." Now I ask you, who is crazy here, Sibert? Or the gullible magistrate, so faithfully reflecting the cockeyed values of our time?

I have previously criticized the *Washington Post* as though it were the principal national fountainhead of correct liberalism. Therefore this might be the place to say that the *Post*'s editorial page, of late, has become, if anything, fairly conservative, especially in its foreign policy editorials. The paper's National section is still conventionally liberal in its "optional stories"—those not dictated by breaking news events; for example, no opportunity to paste the oil companies or business in general is overlooked. And the Style section has become merely feeble, filled with reviews by third-rate critics or daily reminders by black theologians of the fourth estate that we live in a racist society. Thus the editorial page comes as something of a surprise.

To give just one example, here is an editorial entitled "Andrew Young Is Not the Problem." The *Post* pointed out that President Carter "was slow to rally to the cause of racial justice in the American South, and this failure filled him with a sense of guilt...." Young's diplomacy, the *Post* added, was characterized by "improvisations and insults and affectations of moral superiority and personal importance." Thus the Carter policy was "superficial and unnecessarily risky." The conclusion: "Those who question the administration's Africa policy should look first to President Carter and to his own evident motivation. Guilt can be a powerful and legitimate human impulse. Whether it translates into wise policy is something else again." In liberaldom, that, too, is a *verboten* thought. I doff my cap. □

THE NATION'S PULSE
by
Peter J. Rusthoven

Le Roi Est Mort...

The recent death of Elvis Presley at the age of 42 has set off a series of events—some quite touching and even moving, others simply bizarre, still others coldly, calculatingly commercial—which the demise of no other performer in this country could have inspired. At this point, the commercial repercussions are the most evident. In the Midwest, at least, it is impossible to watch TV or listen to the radio without hearing a pitch for any of a number of hastily put together collections of Elvis songs, presented in that all too familiar style that is now virtually a genre in the ad business ("This unique tribute to Elvis is not available in any store"/"$6.98 for albums, $8.98 for tapes"/"So you don't forget, send your check or money order before midnight tonight to ELVIS, Post Office Box..."/"That address again is ELVIS..."). For a time, RCA had people working overtime, seven days a week, trying to keep up with the sudden surge in demand for Elvis recordings. T-shirts and pennants and posters are readily available, indeed, were hawked by scores of street-corner entrepreneurs to mourners outside Presley's Memphis mansion, even as his body lay in state inside. One young man, displaying a truly remarkable ability to mimic the voice and style of the now-deceased King of Rock and Roll, has even put out a 45 RPM "tribute" which, when first heard, sounds eerily like Elvis singing about his own departure.

While the commercial exploitation might easily have been predicted, some of the other occurrences in the week following Elvis' death seem straight from the pen of an over-imaginative screenwriter. Thousands upon thousands of ordinary, far-from-wealthy citizens dropped everything and headed straight to the mansion known as "Graceland" when the news broke. For the funeral itself—which featured a snow-white hearse followed by one white Cadillac limousine after another—a myriad of the more eminent individuals from the entertainment world joined them on Elvis Presley Boulevard in Memphis. The tearful vigil outside the front gate, itself decorated with musical notes and guitars, was disrupted at one point by a drunken hit-and-run driver, who careened wildly through the crowd leaving two dead bodies in his wake. And Elvis had hardly been enshrined in the Presley mausoleum when a plot to kidnap the body and hold it for ransom was discovered and immediately foiled.

A casual observer may be forgiven for deriving a certain detached and cynical amusement from all this. Some aspects of the phenomenon that Elvis' death—like his life—became no doubt merit such a reaction. But to this observer, who has never been particularly casual when it comes to Elvis, the most significant feature amid all the nonsense and commercialism was the spontaneous, quite genuine, and surprisingly deep grief displayed by masses of regular people who simply loved Elvis Presley and thought he was the greatest. Given the egocentricity of most show business types, the thought must have crossed the mind of more than one celebrity in Memphis last month that, "However 'big' I become, when I go it won't be anything like this."

Anyone who in fact had that thought is right, of course; and to me it seems eminently just that the depth of mourning for Elvis Presley far surpass that which other entertainers may reasonably antici-

---

Peter J. Rusthoven is an Indianapolis attorney.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pate in whatever private visions they cherish of a dramatic send-off. As one born in 1951, I suppose it would have been more normal for me to have viewed Elvis as "before my time," but through the fortuity of having two brothers roughly ten years older than I, my introduction to the King was an early one. My admiration and affection developed immediately and remained constant throughout, for the most basic of reasons: Elvis could sing, and sing beautifully. His music was simple, it was fun, it was good—all that one could ask. There was no one better.

Elvis is often credited with having been the creator as well as monarch of Rock and Roll, and justly so. However, in the rush of pretentious and banal commentary, offered in the wake of his death by a variety of supercilious and self-important commentators, Elvis has also been portrayed as a "revolutionary" precursor of the more "modern" pop music that has produced such questionable delights as Kiss and the Rolling Stones, and this is slanderous nonsense. It was, in fact, one of Elvis' virtues, in this era when popular music has assumed such unwarranted importance in the lives of presumptuous and self-indulgent youth throughout the world, that he was never part of this trend.

When I was in college, rock music was a critical part of the surroundings. Almost everyone had a stereo system in his room —some of them quite elaborate. Bob Dylan was a beacon to many who saw themselves as little living examples that "the times, they are a-changin'." Pete Seeger and his ilk provided musical accompaniment to the holy moral struggle against "the war." Scores of artists seemed devoted to providing music to match the every mood of the adolescent identity crises loading down all the serious little people going through school with a set of headphones on poppa's money. The Rolling Stones, of course, were featured phonographic entertainment at most any weekend party, and occasionally served in the front lines of the anti-war movement as well: I can still vividly recall seeing, during the riot in Harvard Square in April 1969, my freshman year, this grinning, bearded face staring with wide-eyed delight at the window-breaking, police-baiting spectacle going on three stories below him, as the lyric strains of "Street Fighting Man" blared forth from the speakers he had thoughtfully placed on his window sills in honor of the occasion.

Elvis was regally above and beyond such foolishness. His songs partook of simpler, purer, more basic and more honest themes. They spoke of romance beginning (as in "It's Now or Never," set incongruously but beautifully to the score of "*O Sole Mio*"), or of romance ending (as in his rendition of "Are You Lonesome Tonight"), and even of the importance of a neat appearance (as in the immortal "Blue Suede Shoes"). Often, his songs had no discernible theme at all, but were simply fun to listen to and fun to dance to—as in "Hound Dog," or "Jailhouse Rock," or the incomparable "Tutti Frutti." The sophomoric pomposity of "revolutionary" or "political" pop music was not to Elvis' taste. The closest he ever strayed to such nonsense was a forgivable venture into the largely harmless humanitarianism of the early 1960s, entitled "In The Ghetto"—and even that, unlike the talentless screeching which dominates today's charts, was well sung. Elvis' style and personality were original, his rhythm and beat perhaps revolutionary, and his voice without doubt richly unique, and all these played their part in making him great. But his music remained simply music—and in this, too, lay much of the explanation for his greatness.

Trite as the saying may be, Elvis Presley's was indeed a uniquely American

Available for Christmas:

The Concise Bible A condensation by Frances Kanes Hazlitt

While only one-twelfth the size of the complete Bible, this edition introduces the reader to all 66 books, with the full text of the most famous passages from the King James version. Chapter and verse are provided for each quoted passage. "I shall make great use of it personally and am glad to commend it to all people who are interested in a greater knowledge of the Bible"—Rev. Norman Vincent Peale. "The continuity of the entire Bible is maintained by skillful abridgement. This is a volume to be treasured in itself"—Rev. Edmund A. Opitz. Hardcover $7.95, Paperback $1.95.

They Preached Liberty

The church today is vitally concerned with liberty. What are its origins? Is it a divine gift or an outmoded theory of human rationalism? What are the obligations of liberty? The New England ministers of the American Revolution answered these questions so wisely that their answers have special significance today. This anthology of timely quotations includes an introductory essay and biographical sketches by the Rev. Franklin P. Cole. Hardcover $5.95, Paperback $1.25.

The Wisdom of Adam Smith

Adam Smith may have been the first great economist, but he was no dismal scientist. He was instead a man of great philosophical and historical learning, and his literary style was widely admired. *The Wisdom of Adam Smith* brings together his most incisive and eloquent observations on subjects ranging from political and economic history to morals, philosophy, art, education, war and the American colonies. Compiled by British scriptwriter and playwright John Haggarty, edited and with an introduction by Benjamin A. Rogge. Hardcover $7.95, Paperback $1.95.

The Roots of Capitalism By John Chamberlain

A provocative look at the intellectual forces and practical accomplishments that have created American capitalism. "A vastly persuasive case for capitalist theory and practice"—*Barron's*. Hardcover $9.00, Paperback $3.00.

The Servile State By Hilaire Belloc

A perceptive warning, first published in 1913, of the consequences of statism and the effect of socialist doctrine on capitalist society. With an introduction by Robert Nisbet. "A landmark of political thought in this century"—Walter Lippmann. Hardcover $8.00, Softcover $2.00.

LibertyPress LibertyClassics

LibertyPress/LibertyClassics
7440 North Shadeland, Dept. A2
Indianapolis, Indiana 46250

Please send me the following books.

Quantity	Title	Price Per Copy

Total enclosed: $_____. Please make checks payable to Liberty Fund, Inc. We pay postage on prepaid orders.

Print name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

story. Born in Tupelo, Mississippi, reared in Tennessee, son of a truck driver, and, for a time, a truck driver himself, he rose on the strength of his talent (as well as some shrewd management by Colonel Tom Parker) to a level of wealth and fame beyond comprehension. The glamour and excess and virtual idolatry that accompanied his rise were possible only in the affluent, media-conscious culture of this land. Like every true American hero, he never forgot his humble beginnings, and his way of saying thanks to the commoner folk reflected his continued understanding of the dreams of the people from whom he had sprung. Not for Elvis the protest march, or the benefit concert for trendy causes, favored by some performers as a device for expressing "solidarity" with the "working man." Far from it—he gave away Cadillacs, and on each occasion when he did so, contributed more to the sum total of human happiness on this planet than all the wailing Joan Baez has ever done for unionized grape picking. And the tragedy of his early death, including the more grotesque and bizarre events which accompanied it, was, in its way, uniquely American as well.

Elvis Presley's death, of course, has caused but a momentary fluctuation in the nation's pulse, and even that for only some of the nation. But at the very least, it was the demise of one who brought simple and healthy pleasure to a generation of younger Americans, and not a few older ones as well. He made no pretense to brilliance, or to insight, or to anything other than being an entertainer, and in his field he was unexcelled. To me, as to millions of others, he was indeed the King, a part of the background of my life. His death brings home the passing of time in a surprisingly personal sense that I never expected to feel until I was much older—the sense that I am told the elderly feel when they turn to the obituary pages and see yet another two-inch block of newsprint recording the ending of their times. Elvis Presley was a wonder, and I shall miss him. □

Roger Kaplan

Voices for Europe

A special book review essay of The Totalitarian Temptation *by Jean-François Revel (translated by David Hapgood, Doubleday, $8.95) and* Plaidoyer Pour L'Europe Décadente *by Raymond Aron (Robert Laffont, Paris, F. 49.00).*

A specter, wrote Karl Marx in 1848, is haunting Europe: Communism. One hundred and thirty years later, Communism is an established fact in half of Europe and more than half of Asia, and in the countries where it reigns it has produced stagnation and repression. Yet its demonology continues to haunt guilt-ridden and frustrated intellectuals in those parts of the world where it is still only a proposal, not yet a somber practice.

Indeed, one of the curious things about the history of political ideas in liberal democracies is the recurrence of what Jean-François Revel calls the "totalitarian temptation." For the dissatisfied, sexually confused, harassed, overeducated, underwise intellectuals, for the impotent little would-be dictators, for the busybodies and the envious, the sloganeering reduction of the problems of society to supposedly rational and inevitable solutions has proven irresistible again and again. The sinister and dangerous, heroic and perverse dream of a perfect world has always been deeply entrenched in the more irrational recesses of Western consciousness. Without this element, which Raymond Aron calls "prophetism," it is doubtful that the idea of the collectivist regimentation of society could ever have attracted the amount of popularity that it did. The death knell of capitalism, quoth the Protestant Jew in the British Musuem; the final battle, discant his disciples. The idea keeps recurring, and, like all irrational ideas, revelations of what it leads to never seem to be sufficient to explode it.

Paris, France, has been for a very long time one of the great distilleries of Marxism. Fellow-travelling is a way of life in the elegant cafés of the posh neighborhoods. Perhaps living in the most beautiful city on earth softens the brain? No. Aron calls the French intellectual class the most intelligent in the world, and he, very possibly its most intelligent member, knows what he is talking about. What he says precisely is that it is either the most intelligent or the most unreasonable. Not so long ago, for instance, Jean-Paul Sartre, that incredibly foolish genius, was getting away with enormities like: "I know there are concentration camps in the Soviet Union, but I object to the use the bourgeois press makes of them." (Reporting their existence was wrong if it distracted the public from the great Soviet achievements.)

Today, the Soviet model is not quite *à la mode*. The official Communist Party has been attacked for over a decade by purists in the art of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the testimony of the dissidents who have been allowed to leave the Soviet Union has begun to register on many minds. But this has not necessarily made any less powerful and popular the old myths of the left, nor less virulent the vituperations against the bourgeois-liberal-democratic "system." Both Revel and Aron have written books which are exceedingly far-reaching not only in their attack on Communism but also in their defense of liberal capitalism. It is not enough to expose the lies and the failures of the enemy; it is even more important to explain our successes.

One of the reasons intellectuals rarely bring themselves to revile Communism with quite the same thoroughness and passion they bring to their detestation of fascism is that they continue to identify Communism as an "aberrant" or "too brutal" variety of the same progressive humanism which they think they stand for. Revel argues that the hatred of capitalism, upon which this delusion is based, is really a hatred of industrial society, rooted in an ambivalence stemming from the ambiguous and precarious status of many intellectuals. He contends that democratic socialism (which he espouses) can only come about through and in alliance with capitalism. He recognizes in state-controlled economies the threat to political liberty which they are, but his intense dislike of nation-states as such leads him to propose, somewhat nebulously, economic planning on a world scale.

Revel's principal theme is that there always has been too much tolerance of the Communist Party in France, and too many excuses made for Communists in general. They are thought of as tough

---

Roger Kaplan is a doctoral candidate with the Committee on the History of Culture at the University of Chicago.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

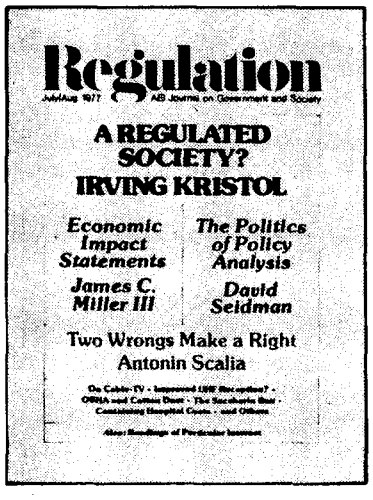
guys whose hearts are in the right place. The result is that criticism of the Soviet Union and of the Party's behavior is muted and selective; it does not reach the fundamental fact: which is that the Communists are not men of the democratic left, and therefore deserve no help from that sector. Communism is still riding on its prestige—dishonestly acquired—as the "party of the workers," and leftish intellectuals are afraid to attack it lest they be accused of serving the reactionaries.

The Communists, Revel points out, contribute to this state of mind constantly and adroitly, though from the outside their tactics seem awfully crude. A statement critical of the Communist Party is denounced immediately as "obsessive anti-Communism," and the entire international Communist press, led by *Tass*, hollers shame at the poor reactionary who dared raise his voice. His motives, it is implied, must be venal; he must be in the pay of the CIA or a multinational firm; he must harbor some deep personal grudge. Revel cites cases where even some of France's most prestigious left-wing journalists, writers for *Le Monde* and the editor of *Le Nouvel Observateur* for instance, have been dragged through the mud. He adds that the tactic works well enough: The anti-Communist voices are lowered.

If the Communists are incapable of tolerating opposition from their friends (they refuse to abide criticism even from François Mitterrand, to whom they may owe their electoral victory next year), how will they behave when they have the Ministry of the Interior? What if they are given Resources and Equipments, and find ways of denying paper pulp to unfriendly newspapers? Revel says quite sensibly that the sincerity of the Communists' espousal of liberal democracy has to be tested against their behavior, that no one should rely on their rhetoric, which for sixty years they always have changed to fit the circumstances. The Communists insist on judging others by their actions, and yet claim they should be judged only by their electoral promises! To read the Communist press, there is no such thing as an honest anti-Communist. What if every time Howard Baker made a statement for the minority, he were accused of "obsessive anti-Democratism," or some nonsense such as being in the pocket of Standard Oil?

The point is that nothing is more important to the Communists than the strength of their party. What may once have been thought of as an instrument for social change quickly became an end in itself. The Party always prepares for the monopoly of power. Inside the parties, there is no dissidence, the Leninist concept of "democratic centralism" being one of the century's earliest examples of Orwellian Newspeak. How can anyone take seriously the conversion to democracy of a party (the French one) which renounced one of its basic tenets, the dictatorship of the proletariat, by a vote of 17,000 to 0? Totalitarian inside, it will establish a totalitarian society once it is in power. Time and time again, democratic socialists have convinced themselves that Communists share their goals, only to end up on the receiving end of the Party's wrath, accused of esoteric sins like "class collaboration" and "capitulation to the bourgeoisie" and "visceral anti-Sovietism." "That is why," writes Revel, "there is no validity to the familiar contention that liberal socialists must be careful to stand aloof from the defenders of capitalism in making their case against Stalinism. Representatives of capitalism combat Stalinism because it wants to destroy them; socialists need feel no shame in doing the same, and for the same reason: because Stalinism wants to destroy them too." To Revel, there has never been any real de-Stalinization, because Stalinism is the inevitable creation of a Marxist-Leninist party.

The totalitarian temptation, then, is the willingness to play with dynamite in the delusion of reaching the promised land. It is the refusal to admit that progress is achieved only by building on past progress. Behind the willingness to risk a dictatorship to "change everything," Revel finds a political pose consisting of three basic elements, the lessons of Paris' "pidgin Marxism": (1) The "system" is unimprovable—its basic freedoms and material



...a new magazine for decision makers

Federal regulation touches almost every aspect of our lives. What we eat, wear, breathe, and ride in — even what we watch on television.

Between 1970 and 1975, seven major federal regulatory agencies were created and 30 laws making substantial changes in our regulatory framework were enacted.

How can a decision maker in business or government assess the economic, social, legal and political impact of all these regulatory actions?

Regulation, a new bimonthly magazine published by the American Enterprise Institute, provides information to help you do this. AEI invites you to become a Charter Subscriber and learn more about the regulations, the regulators and the regulatory process.

Read articles and essays evaluating existing programs and suggesting improvements by scholars like
Irving Kristol • Austin Ranney • Milton Friedman • Jeane Kirkpatrick • Murray Weidenbaum
Paul MacAvoy • Robert Bork

Take advantage of the special Charter Subscription price of $10 for one year (six issues) or $20 for two years (twelve issues). Just check the offer you prefer and we will bill you later.

☐ Enter my Charter Subscription for one year at $10.
☐ Enter my Charter Subscription for two years at $20.
☐ Please send me more information about **Regulation.**

American Enterprise Institute
Circulation Desk, **Regulation**
1150 Seventeenth Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Name_____
Organzation_____
Address_____
City_____ State _____ Zip_____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

welfare are insignificant; (2) the first political task is therefore to "destroy the system"; (3) "imperialism" is always and everywhere an extension of American capitalism. While this reflects a mentality which in another age would have accepted the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, it is not restricted to the lunatic fringe. On the contrary, it is the reigning orthodoxy in much of the world. The man decked out in the *haute couture* of pidgin Marxism thinks his noble ends—which are utterly reactionary, as knows any economist who has studied the effects of ever-widening circles of state regulation—allow him to inflict upon his people (if he is in power) humiliation and devastation, and upon his friends (if he is merely a salon pol) hours of tedium. It is a facile system to believe in, and the danger is that it will engulf the world in permanent stupidity, conflict, and repression.

Raymond Aron's very large work, *Plea for Decadent Europe*, is divided among three masterfully presented themes. The first takes up the principal topic of Revel's book: "Europe Mystified by Marxist-Leninism." It does not, however, recapitulate what Revel writes. While Revel is concerned mainly with the present situation —the Communists' tactics and the weakness of the democratic left in opposing them—Aron is more the historian, devoting several chapters to an analysis of the Marxist heritage.

According to Aron, Marx's fundamental legacy was not a critique of capitalist society, powerful as his was, but a philosophy of history based on prophecy. His stroke of genius was to point to the aspect of capitalism which he found most abhorrent—the expropriation of what he called surplus-value—and to say that it would be the cause of the system's doom by autodestruction. The pseudo-scientific analysis combined with moral condemnation is what gives Marxism its longevity, its popularity with serious thinkers as well as political hooligans in need of slogans.

In the second part of the book, Aron examines the reasons why "Europe is unaware of its superiority." He starts with a lucid and thorough summary of Soviet socialism and an analysis of its bankruptcy. He then discusses the "unfindable socialism" which almost all his colleagues in the French intelligentsia declare themselves to believe in (even Revel, he notes wryly), and the "imperialism with no empire" which many of these people (not Revel, this time!) have convinced their Third World epigones is the cause of their countries' problems.

Aron shows that even some of the most democratic leftists in France, like *Le Monde*'s highly respected Maurice Duverger, are still captives of the "vulgate," the reduction of Marx to easy slogans. Duverger, in characteristic French unconcern for day-to-day reality, attacks the British and German socialists for forgetting Marx and, in consequence, drifting into opportunism. Aron points out that it would be nice if more socialists were as opportunistic as the West Germans. Whether England would benefit from a dose of Marx, along with everything else, is a question rich in black humor, but not of much help to her present problems.

Aron is not very big on social democracy, even the Swedish variety which is supposed to have worked so well. Sweden, he suggests, is paternalistic and dull, a relic of the Middle Ages in the level of its conformism; but at least the Swedes have understood the meaning of the international market economy and the private sector. The French Socialist Party, disdaining social democracy and proclaiming bold (and Communist-inspired) nationalization plans, is following ideas which every economist knows will lead to stagnation, panic, and trouble.

In the third part of the book, Aron asks whether Europe will be a victim of its own weaknesses and self-doubts. As always, he starts with the facts, and examines the economic implications of the changes wrought by the recession of 1973. One need not dwell on his analysis of the "end of the miracle," since a paraphrase would only diminish its excellence, except to say that he sees it as far less serious than the Depression of the 30s. He considers our chronic inflation to be the principal problem. In taking this view he is arguing, like many economists, that the West's present difficulties are largely political, or moral. The Western governments are simply too weak to take measures which will be unpopular in the short term. The inflation, meanwhile, is a destabilizing factor in every sector of society. Aron's concern is whether it will bring about the disintegration of the Common Market, the collapse of Great Britain, and the participation of Communists in the governments of France and Italy. He then asks, in two very fine chapters well worth the price of the book, whether the liberal democracies are going to destroy themselves.

Aron is confident of the United States' capacity for survival, because the rule of law and the guarantees of individual liberty remain our strongest national traditions. He has less confidence in France and Italy, where the revolutionary myth—in the sense of a complete overturn of society and the creation of new men—still inspires political parties and activities, and where, as a result, the rules of the democratic game are not accepted universally. Aron takes a very dim view of "Eurocommunism." The middle road which it claims to have found, between the Soviet model and reformist social democracy, appears dangerous under his scrutiny. Like Revel, he questions how parties claiming to accept political pluralism can at the same time claim a monopoly on the truth. A Santiago Carillo may announce that Moscow is no longer Rome, but his party retains the totalitarian structure which Lenin proclaimed indispensable for the success of the Revolution. "As long as the parties resemble armies of militants, under the authority of a few, as long as these parties turn leftward and rightward at the slightest command, no one will take literally their most solemn declarations." Aron does not, by the way, forget to criticize Christian Democracy and Gaullism. These movements' overlong stay in power, favoritism, cronyism, corruption, and often plain ineptitude have contributed sizably to the fragility of their countries' democratic institutions.

If the French Communist Party remains deeply Stalinist, Aron admits—albeit with great caution—that the Italian Communist Party, because of the circumstances under which it may come to power, is less dangerous, at least in the short run. The PCI is committed to the progress Italy has made, and does not want to precipitate a crisis—especially since it already controls so much of the country. Italian capitalism is not exactly dynamic; the Communists find themselves in the ironic situation of resisting further encroachments by the state on the private sector because they do not want to inherit a totally ruined economy. If Italy's economy can be turned around, the Communists may yet opt to preserve the legality which has served them so well.

Two specters, Aron rephrases Marx, are haunting Europe today: liberty and the Red Army. The success of the first depends upon the Europeans' lucidity, and their willingness to face economic reality honestly and to arrest the drift toward statism. Writes Aron, "the English disease hovers over all the Western economies: under pretext of redistribution or under pressure from interest groups, the temptation is to increase the role of the state in the national product, until the private sector, starved of capital, or forced to replace an excessively expensive work-force by machinery, will be unable to offer work." As for lucidity, in the past two years a small but influential group of young French philosophers has begun to attack the Marxism which they absorbed in their school years and which they carried boldly into the streets in May 1968. Their enterprise is deeply philosophical in the old-fashioned sense, but it obviously has political ramifications. The French intelligentsia is being told by its youngest stars that it can no longer assume glibly that Marxism contains the fundamental answers—or any answers—to the problems of our times, and, by implication, that it cannot automatically predicate its political choices on a socialist cornerstone.

Perhaps the tide is shifting. Way back in 1954, Aron took a courageous and lonely position in his classic, *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, which described the intellectuals' failure, under the influence of politics and ideology, to fulfill their responsibility of critically facing up to reality. One of his American friends, H.J. Kaplan, had published two years earlier a daring novel, *Anywhere Else*, which might have spared a whole generation a lot of political stupidity if it had been properly read. If the tide does shift, and Aron begins to find himself a little less lonely, surely it will be due in large part to both his own efforts and those of Jean-François Revel. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOK REVIEW

The New Mencken Letters
Edited by Carl Bode / The Dial Press / $19.50

James T. Farrell

The good that H.L. Mencken did was not interred with his bones. At one time, Mencken was a Voice in American life and letters. The twenties was a decade in which writers such as Mencken and Sinclair Lewis strongly influenced the thinking of many Americans, especially those whom Mencken frequently called "the civilized minority." Mencken reached the height of his popularity in the twenties when he founded the *American Mercury*.

Mencken and Walter Lippmann had little if anything in common. Mencken had little respect for Lippmann, who had been a principal contributor to the *New Republic* during the early days after its founding in 1914. Mencken referred to the editors and those around this magazine as "the kept idealists of the *New Republic*." Nevertheless, Walter Lippmann not only recognized the power of Mencken but even paid tribute to it. In 1926, he wrote that Mencken was "the most powerful personal influence on this whole generation of educated people." He summarized the effect of Mencken's writing by declaring that "the man increases your will to live."

Mencken attacked the liberal tendencies in this country before World War I. He had formed his own views under the influence of Darwin, the Yale scholar William Graham Sumner, and Friedrich Nietzsche. His writing was vigorous and carried more conviction than a sober analysis of many of his ideas would suggest. Mencken had an almost voracious appetite for books and ideas, but he could think for himself. He was an individualist committed to free thinking, not only for himself but for others. He defended the rights of those with whom he disagreed and admired the sincerity of intellectually courageous men whose ideas he dismissed as hogwash. Thus, he defended the rights of free speech of the socialists Eugene V. Debs and Scott Nearing.

His own background was middle class and Puritan and, as Edmund Wilson pointed out, Mencken was not free of Puritanism. Yet he became a powerful critic of the parochial Victorian Puritanism which had spread its moral pall over so much of nineteenth-century American thinking and writing—and carried over into the twentieth century.

Mencken's influence was wielded more by the strength of his writing than by the power of his ideas. He was anti-democratic and the ideas of Social Darwinism, which have had a pervasive influence in this country, are strung through his writings.

Mencken's role was that of a liberator and it was most felt in American literature. His defense of Dreiser is a dramatic example of this. He helped more writers than any other editor in the history of American writing. When he and George Jean Nathan edited the *Smart Set*, they published James Joyce. Both in the *Smart Set* and the *American Mercury*, Mencken published new and younger writers. He disregarded their politics and their views on any subject other than the one they wrote about. If he thought the writing was good, he published it. From his correspondence, we learn that he hailed and thought highly of the writings of Henry Miller.

Mencken was a prodigious letter writer. Carl Bode, the editor of *The New Mencken Letters*, estimates that Mencken must have written a hundred thousand of them. He made it a rule to answer letters whenever possible on the day they were received. His letters were short and direct. In *The New Mencken Letters* there are samples of his correspondence with most of the major writers of his time.

H.L. Mencken himself was an interesting man and he had correspondence with many of the most interesting men of the time. His letters reflect the course of his life and his changing interests. During the twenties, for instance, he started to pay less attention to literature and more to politics and the general American scene. After his pathfinding *The American Language* was published, the number of letters dealing with linguistics increased.

There are also letters to his women friends and ex-friends. In these, he does not reveal intimate feelings or emotions. On the whole, Mencken kept all that was private in his life to himself. There is more about the costs of various commodities, hotel bills, and the like than there is about how he felt—except when he gave expression to many of his admitted prejudices. And there are humorous letters—especially to his friend Philip Goodman.

In Mencken's letters, the boob and "booboisie" (a word he coined) come in for a share of ridicule. Mencken's use of hyperbole was one of the principal characteristics of his humor. And lest we forget, it was Mencken who wrote that one should not underestimate the stupidity of the American boob. He laughed at the foibles, the preposterousness, and the absurdity of *Homo sapiens* as though he were enjoying the sight of clowns in a circus. Generally, he regarded life as a circus, redeemed only by those who belonged to a "civilized minority." Nevertheless, he did not lack sympathy for those who were troubled—including many whom he did not know.

Mencken looked upon politics as the biggest circus in a world of circuses. His political analyses and predictions were often off the mark. He was neither a good political analyst or prognosticator. At times the use of hyperbole in his political comments, both in his published writings and in his letters, seems to have led him to make far-fetched predictions that terrible things would happen, which did not come to pass.

Here, I might refer to one of Mencken's most quoted remarks—that a Chinaman could defeat the incumbent presidential candidate, Franklin D. Roosevelt, in 1936. On October 22, 1935, in a letter to Bishop James Cannon, Jr., to whom he was strongly opposed in matters of censorship but with whom he maintained cordial personal relations, Mencken wrote: "If the country actually turns against him [Roosevelt], it will be possible to beat him with a Chinaman."

When President Roosevelt first came into office, Mencken looked on him with favor but he quickly changed his mind. He wrote of "Roosevelt Minor" with greater scorn than he ever did of Harding, Coolidge, or Hoover. He looked upon Franklin D. Roosevelt and the members of his "Brain Trust" as quacks. At the same time, he had friendly correspondence and relations with Judge Felix Frankfurter, who was responsible for the appointment of some of the most intelligent of the so-called Brain Trusters. Generally speaking, there was a lack of personal spite or rancor in Mencken.

"Carlyle was right," Mencken said to me once. "The only solution to the problems of living out a lifetime is work." I more or less agreed with him. He said this to me after his wife Sara Haardt had died. I did not realize then that her death had strongly motivated this statement. Mencken's hurt over her death was not apparent to me until after I read these letters. As I mentioned earlier, little was given to reveal his personal feelings, his sadnesses.

The New Mencken Letters is ably edited by Professor Carl Bode of the University of Maryland. The reader is certain to gain a fuller sense of what the man Mencken was like, and of the role he played in American literature.

The idea of a book of Mencken letters was first conceived by Dr. Julian Boyd of the Library of Princeton University. Boyd collected something like 8,000 Mencken letters but before he completed his project,

---

Contrary to a report in the Chicago Tribune, *James T. Farrell is alive and well in New York City. Mr. Farrell's latest book, his fiftieth, is* The Dunne Family.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his interest shifted to—in his phrase—"another great writer." He began working on a collection of the writings of Thomas Jefferson. In 1962 Guy J. Forgue, a Frenchman, edited a selection of Mencken letters from some 15,000 of them which he was able to read from various sources. But Forgue confined himself to literary letters. Carl Bode has had the advantage of greater access to Mencken's papers. But there is no point in comparing these two books. Both are good and should be read.

One final word. I began this review by writing of Mencken's influence. This was manifested in the careers and writings of many writers whose works and ideas did not follow his ideas. One measure of his liberating role is that his influence was helpful to many who came to think differently from him. And also, Mencken's influence extended beyond the American shore. *The Australian Language* by Sidney J. Baker (published in Sydney in 1945) did for Australian speech what Mencken did for ours.

Mencken is gone but it will be one hell of a long time before he is forgotten. □

BOOK REVIEW

We Must March My Darlings

Diana Trilling / Harcourt Brace Jovanovich / $10.00

John Fox

To the average intellectual's gaze, Diana Trilling cuts a slightly ridiculous figure. The enlightened classes are busy denuding CIA fronts, and she goes about saying, for attribution: "I am, was, and always shall be an anti-Communist." Liberationists daily expose new frontiers of oppression, and she insists on the primacy of *manners*, and quotes D.H. Lawrence: "Men are freest when they are most unconscious of freedom. The shout is a rattling of chains, always was." And worse, as heroine Lillian Hellman is picking the latest bouquet from off the cultural-political stage, Mrs. Trilling interrupts the proceedings with the news that one of Miss Hellman's dearest friends, her reputation, has died of massive historical inaccuracy.

But more than slightly ridiculous, Trilling is slightly menacing to the common run of intellectual. This is because she is unremittingly aware of the nexus between intellect and power—social, political, cultural. Writing among and about "the people I know best, the academic and literary intellectuals of New York," Trilling in her social criticism seldom violates a simple hard-won principle: Thought is in a real sense action—ideas have consequences, and their authors bear crucial moral responsibility for them.

The scandal involved in the publication of *We Must March My Darlings* illustrates the rewards that now accrue to one who too carefully connects political idea with political responsibility. The attempted censorship of this book likewise points up divisions that have plagued the Left since Joseph Stalin's rise to power, and shows a new generation why many controversies of the thirties and fifties continue to enjoy robust life.

Trilling was among the targets of the guilt-bullets fired in playwright Hellman's memoir of the 1950s, *Scoundrel Time*. Hellman had accused her and her late husband, literary critic Lionel Trilling, of deviationist views on the Alger Hiss case (Lionel believed Whittaker Chambers' testimony, calling him "a man of honor"). Hellman wondered how the evidently respectable Trillings could maintain views of black anti-Communism in this age of light, and she let it be known that such views and such people had, willy-nilly, brought us two of history's greatest evils, Vietnam and Richard Nixon.

The Trilling reply to this standard revisionist wisdom met with censorship at Little, Brown (also Hellman's publisher), as per instructions to delete four passages critical of Hellman. Miss Hellman was merely being protected by a publisher of especial "loyalty," we were meant to believe. "I was told it contained a hysterical personal attack on me," the McCarthy victim told the *New York Times*. Pressed for some elaboration of the book's horrors, its Little, Brown editor Roger Donald replied in measured tones, "I know what the hell's in the goddam manuscript."

Little, Brown had no choice but to attempt this suppression, since the response to Hellman is unanswerable. The offending essay, "Liberal Anti-Communism Revisited" (which appears uncut courtesy of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich), is importantly a defense of left-wing anti-Communism, which Trilling considers an essential part of contemporary liberalism. "Not all anti-Communists are liberals, but in my mind no one can call himself a liberal who is not an anti-Communist." Why? Because Communist regimes violate basic liberal tenets. It is impossible

> for anyone of liberal commitment, and particularly in the name of liberalism, to tolerate any system of government, whatever its professed goals, which deprives its people of the elementary freedom of self-government, speech, travel, cultural expression, and—more—which implements this authoritarianism by mass murder and mass enslavement of dissidents.

Trilling cites a discomforting fact which has been negligible to so much of the Left for so long: The Soviet Union has for political reasons murdered more of its citizens than did Hitler's Germany.

As for Lillian Hellman, the (old) news is broadcast that the reigning Empress Wears No Clothes. Miss Hellman has founded her moral authority on a highly self-serving version of her appearance before the House Un-American Activities Committee; Trilling shows her facts on the Hiss case to be wrong, and suggests that a past spent as apologist for Stalin may compromise one's new career as moral prosecutor of other people's political pasts. For the new wave of moral bookkeepers like Garry Wills (who goes after the Cold War with a historical meat-axe in his introduction to *Scoundrel Time*), it must be disconcerting, once you have roundly condemned "red-baiters" and laid the blame for a self-righteous Cold War at Harry Truman's door, to have Diana Trilling dig up an old column of yours from the *National Review*, in which you remarked that "Russia has grown like an evil fungus, because of the pale atmosphere of cowardice everywhere," and in which you praise Chiang Kai-shek's regime as a "desperate romance of courage...the stuff of epic." But few commentators have noted the force of such rigorous argument, or the ironic flaw in the revisionist posture: that it is a part of chic conscience to lionize a woman who waves a thirty-year-old blacklist in one hand while she colludes in the censorship of "hysterical" books with the other (her left?).

Trilling affirms the beleaguered tradition of the liberal anti-Stalinist (there was "an active consistency in having been opposed to *both* Communism and McCarthyism"). She calls Joe McCarthy the "greatest gift the U.S. could have given the Soviet Union (and it looks like a gift of permanent value)." To understand the political situation of the last forty years, one must appreciate the one-time "intense Communist partisanship among our ostensibly most conscientious and educated classes." These intellectuals' fondest hopes for a Soviet socialist utopia were

---

John Fox, a recent graduate of Princeton, is currently studying at Oxford.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

massively betrayed by Stalin, via the purge trials and concentration camps, an inconceivable 1939 non-aggression pact with Hitler, and post-war grabs in Eastern Europe. If progressives had faced up to "their own principled job of intellectual housecleaning" made necessary by Stalinism, Trilling thinks that McCarthyite investigating committees would have had no chance for their "incursions on democratic freedom." From this follows one of the book's most pregnant observations: Growth of true left-wing radicalism in the U.S. was stunted by the unholy alliance of the Left with Communism, and is still thwarted by a widespread refusal to recognize any *ennemi sur la gauche*, no matter how menacing.

But the book is much more than a telling anti-Stalinist polemic. As spirited social critic and skillful reporter, Trilling doggedly follows the cultural careenings of the past decade. To a becalmed audience of the seventies, many of the subjects will seem dated; her writing of them never is. Whether dissecting *Easy Rider* or exploring the torments of middle-class adolescence in an Ivy League morass known as Radcliffe, Trilling focuses an eye on the enduring foolhardiness as well as the hope and menace that unite her subjects.

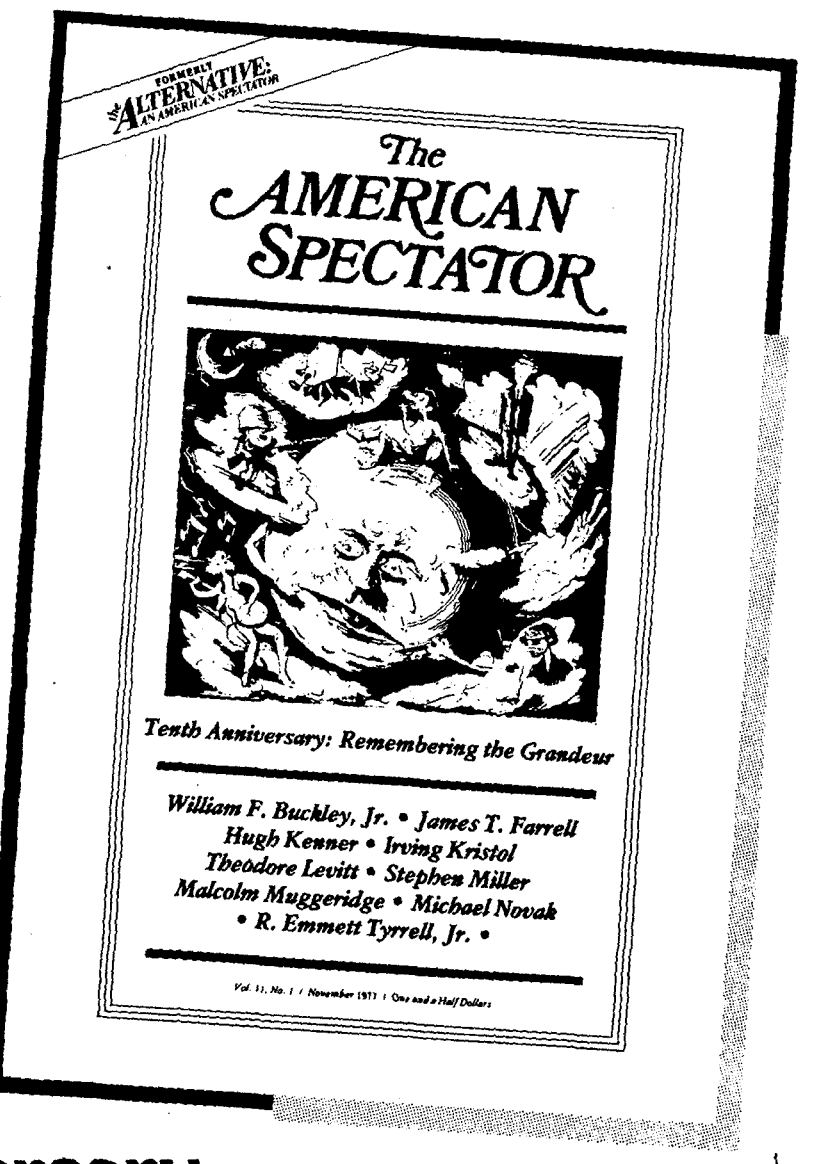
Her viewpoint is never predictable, always provocative. Trilling can cite capitalism as "the corrupting element" in a democratic society, and in the next paragraph declare, "for me, the arms used against the South Vietnamese were not morally sterilized in their passage from Russia to North Vietnam." The self-dubbed "old-line feminist" can describe women's liberation in 1971 as "an authoritarianism already notably advanced in purpose and efficiency."

With the best critics, who treat scholarship and life as of a piece, the most suggestive lines are often those of glancing detail or anecdote. This is one reason Trilling's essays have a life of their own, and with no loss of mental rigor—a rare combination of qualities in commentary on this period. Thus she describes Norman Mailer's seriocomic participation in the October 1967 march on the Pentagon, as refracted through her reading of his account, *The Armies of the Night*. Mailer celebrates the "existential," and "has for some years served faithfully at the ceremonies of experience," Trilling notes. "One's own existential moment yields to no other," she says, and neither should Mailer's, which came onstage before a mass gathering of anti-Vietnam marchers. Rising to address the throng without a prepared speech, a drunken Mailer seized the occasion to trade obscenities ("ad hoc, like the politics to which he now gives his approval") with his audience. The account of the existential moment's climax is vintage Trilling:

> It must have been a sudden providence—no, that is not right, it is not providence, certainly not Mailer's Christian providence, to which the existential revolution looks for guidance in its program of programlessness, but some intuitive knowledge of the fitness of things, of need and the fitting response to need—it must have been his nicest intuition of fitness, then, that suggested to Mailer the possibilities of political persuasion in his need to go to the bathroom and evacuate his bowels.

If Trilling can summon an affectionately piercing humor at some of the decade's political and cultural effusions, she is more frankly appalled at others. She recoils before what she calls "the tide of nihilism" that surges through these years, through the most advanced sectors of society. It is as indiscriminate and ripping as a force of nature, with the concerned social critic, the parental liberal, powerless to stop it, groping simply to understand it.

Trilling makes asides about "these times of our confusion" and the "vacuum [that] now passes for the structure of life," and wonders at the "strangely isolate young people" she finds in Greenwich Village and Cambridge, Mass. She concludes, from a careful watch of virulent liberation movements, that "the energies we have most ready to us are the energies of rage and imposition, we who are supposed to be so contemptuous of governments, or sexes, that rage and impose."



Tenth Anniversary Collector's Item

In response to several inquiries by readers, we have increased our press run for the Tenth Anniversary Issue of *The American Spectator*. For a limited time you can purchase additional copies of this special issue at the original cover price. Just fill out the order form below and send us $1.50 (5 for $5.00) and we will rush you your additional copies postpaid.

The American Spectator
P.O. Box 877
Bloomington, Indiana 47401

Please rush me ..... copies of your Tenth Anniversary Issue. Enclosed is $..... ($1.50 each; 5 copies for $5).

Please write for price information on larger orders.
Payment must accompany orders.

PLEASE PRINT

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

111

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What feeds this confusion, isolateness, and rage, or causes Norman Mailer to subvert his existential Pentagon moment (while the boys are *dying* over there), unless it is a deeper despair in the self that inevitably finds its political-cultural expression? Mrs. Trilling's best defense against a pervading despair is to raise a distinct moral voice, to make a principled stand based on reason, humanistic decency, and her own vital stubbornness.

The objecting cry of this moral voice is heard in a critique of the "tune in, turn on, drop out" phenomenon, "Celebrating With Dr. Leary." The essay hinges on a characteristic instance of contemporary moral disingenuousness. At the crest of the LSD craze, Trilling reports, a high priest of the self-proclaimed "new religion" told a congregation of Leary-eyed celebrants: "Even if they [sixteen-year-olds on LSD] end up in a hospital or prison for a few months, it doesn't bother me." Trilling will not accept the new dispensation, if these be the "eggs that had to be broken to make Dr. Leary's omelet." Her rejection of one more salvific vision is compelling, but restless. She spurns the drug cult for the same reason she did the Stalin cult, because of its empirical evil. But she can offer nothing that would alleviate the underlying despair of such movements.

Earlier in the Leary essay, Trilling remarks that the young "face an emptiness, a universe without walls," because "those who train them" have failed to exert a firm authority. She does not go the one step further, to wonder if perhaps these same young have not seen through an authority whose own necessity is its only reason for being, or whether "those who train them" have not felt the imperative of a deepening nihilism sufficiently to cease exerting such an authority. She instead counters with her own renewed commitment to rationalism and further reform of human institutions. There remains nothing else in her program to stem a "tide of nihilism" which is philosophically justified.

One of the strengths of these writings is to show a clear-eyed liberal looking with dismay at a progressivism whose fruits scarcely add up to progress. The breakdown of liberalism has gone far enough for Trilling to remark that "the greater part of the hard work of dealing with our difficult public problems is today being done not on the Left but at the Center or often on the Right." Politically, educationally, intellectually, even sexually she finds the influence of the Left severely disappointing, often harmful to the body politic.

The nature of contemporary liberalism's crisis is most starkly revealed in Mrs. Trilling's very personal account of the 1968 New Left assault on her beloved Columbia University. Perhaps the most instructive thing about "On the Steps of Low Library" is that, for all its intricate observation and moral outrage, it cannot explain why the uprising occurred.

Mrs. Trilling calls those six weeks in spring "a revolution *against* liberalism," and "an unprecedented violation of natural feeling" on the part of ungrateful students toward their devoted professors (one feels the presence of husband Lionel, Columbia's prize faculty member at the time). Hers is naked confession on the border where personal and political pain meet. She describes

> the terrible near-endemic ache of contemporary parenthood, especially in enlightened homes where parental love and hope are so regularly, casually, and, in most part, inexplicably flouted by children grown to a sudden harsh scornfulness of which their parents could have no expectation.

To which any number of insurrectionists might have paused to reply: Love is not enough. Trilling seems genuinely surprised that the progeny of so much enlightenment should have reviled their parents, university, and patrimony of values.

Mark Rudd's ultimatum to Columbia

President Kirk still stuns: "We will destroy your world, your corporation, your University" (in no particular order). SDS cynicism about "community" and "participatory democracy" stuns as well, as Trilling underscores by quoting Rudd's statement made some months later: "We manufactured the issues. The Institute for Defense Analyses is nothing at Columbia. Just three professors. And the gym issue is bull. It doesn't mean anything to anybody." The spirit of the day was expressed by SDS-ers as they rifled President Kirk's private files and urinated in his office wastebasket; and it was expressed in the shout of youth at an elderly couple crossing the campus: "Go home and die, you old people."

Whereas in 1967 she worried about nihilism and the responsibilities of "those who trained" Dr. Leary's young, on her own doorstep in 1968 Mrs. Trilling thinks parents and faculty deserve sympathy, not blame. She curtly dismisses the "culture's famous 'permissiveness' in childrearing, or its affluence," or "the nihilism of the insurrectionary students" as being "useful to our understanding of the campus disruptions."

Trilling records a "tense moment" that spring on the steps of Low Library, when a "Barnard girl-demonstrator jumped up and down in front of the faculty line—the faculty were wearing white armbands of peace—compulsively shouting, 'S--t, s--t, s--t, s--t.' " The vignette could stand as a kind of *summa* of what the revolution among our most advanced classes had to say to the world.

"On the Steps of Low Library" concludes with Diana Trilling asking how Tom Hayden, who believed in the destruction of American society, could have paid sincere homage at the coffin of Robert F. Kennedy, who believed in its reform. She sees in this act only the crowning antithesis of an era. But has she not herself partially reconciled the conflict, when earlier in the same essay she approved the "idea of necessary revolt of some kind against [that] social force [which] disappoints our best expectations from life"? And to those who would ask, when will Columbia cease to rage, Trilling felt "one can only answer with a question of one's own: Is a happier consciousness about to be given us in our country?" When is it *to be given us*? What happens when reforming liberalism has worked its will for forty years and our consciousness is still not happy enough to preclude the inexplicable sudden hurricane of an insurrectionary nihilism?

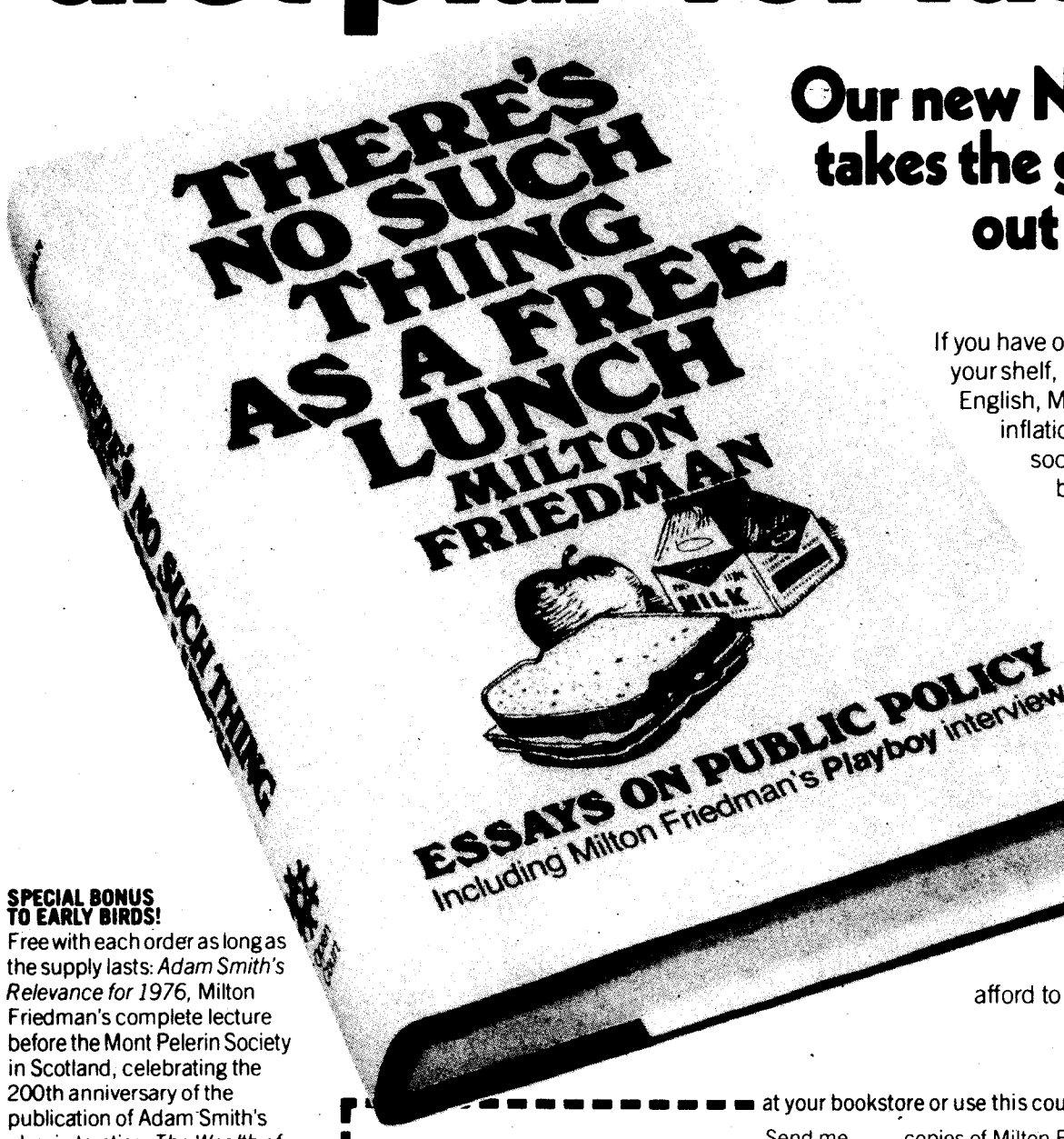
What Trilling, Kennedy, and Hayden share is the belief in a mysterious dispenser of happy consciousness called "society." Their belief differs in degree, but not in kind; man's critical problems are traceable to a common structural source. Trilling favors a renovation of the old structure without violence; Hayden demanded an entirely new one.

There may be comprehensible reasons why liberalism fails in the test with forcible nihilism, and why it is a nearly exhausted tradition (Trilling asks in vain how liberalism may recover itself and again "move forward with history"). Its hopefuls may simply ask too much of it. In the homage to another assassinated Kennedy which opens the book, Trilling eulogizes the JFK presidency, when once-alienated intellectuals felt "that life was solid under our feet despite our uncertainties, and that the present was not only dread and isolation." It is the politician's duty "to give us this reassurance, to dispel our loneliness." What then of her lineal descendants, who also fear and feel alone, who suffer a merely intenser form of Trilling's own deeper need, and who, finding it unmet, lash out in hatred at a "social force," or turn inward with chemicals for liberation from the faculty of reason itself?

A world which sees no higher appeal than to mind may not solve the structural problems of a "universe without walls." A finite, failing liberalism offers no good reason that would stand in the way of another, bloodier generational clash between the will to sanity and the will to destruction; a clash that would come, like the swift Columbia storm, as if from nowhere, as if for no reason at all. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dr. Friedman's diet plan for fat cats.

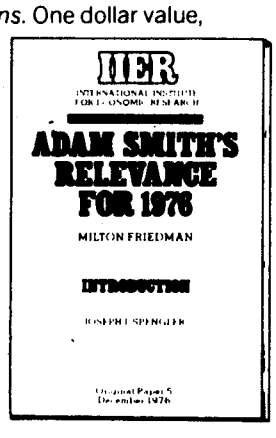

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A FREE LUNCH
MILTON FRIEDMAN
ESSAYS ON PUBLIC POLICY
Including Milton Friedman's Playboy interview

Our new Nobel Laureate takes the gobbledygook out of Economics.

If you have only one book about Economics on your shelf, it should be this one. In clear, plain English, Milton Friedman cheerfully takes on inflation, recession, taxation, regulation, social security, big government, big business, the post office, the price of gold, Ralph Nader and dozens of others. He wins every time. And so will you.

The recipient of the 1976 Nobel Prize didn't write this book for other economists—he wrote it for you. 320 pages packed with wit, wisdom and common sense are organized and indexed so you can flip to Milton Friedman's views on every subject imaginable. It's a book you can't afford to be without. Hardback, just $9.95 plus 80¢ postage and handling.

SPECIAL BONUS TO EARLY BIRDS!
Free with each order as long as the supply lasts: *Adam Smith's Relevance for 1976*, Milton Friedman's complete lecture before the Mont Pelerin Society in Scotland, celebrating the 200th anniversary of the publication of Adam Smith's classic treatise, *The Wealth of Nations*. One dollar value, **FREE.**



at your bookstore or use this coupon

To:
Open Court Publishing
Dept. B-1
LaSalle, Illinois 61301

Send me ____ copies of Milton Friedman's book, *There's No Such Thing as a Free Lunch*, $9.95 plus 80¢ postage and handling for each book, $10.75 total. Include my free bonus booklet.

☐ Payment enclosed
☐ Charge my account with:
☐ BankAmericard/VISA
☐ Master Charge
Bank Number _____
☐ American Express

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Card number _____ Expiration date _____

Illinois and California residents add sales tax.

Multiple orders and booksellers, call toll-free: (800) 435-6850 (in Illinois call collect (815) 223-2520)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOK REVIEW

The Feminization of American Culture
Ann Douglas / Knopf / $15.00

Anne Crutcher

Ann Douglas is not only a formidably learned young woman; she is also a person with original insights and the boldness to follow through on them. Now, at 35, having studied, taught, and written about 19th-century American history and literature at the best universities (Harvard, Oxford, Princeton, Columbia), she has come out with her first book. As might be expected, it has a lot to offer in the way of new interpretations buttressed by strong scholarship. The only thing that keeps it from being a really first-rate work is that the Douglas brains and knowledge and imaginative grasp are so often subservient to a couple of negative ideologies.

Yes, feminism, of the complaining, rationalizing, self-justifying sort. And anti-capitalism. Not socialism or anarchism or any positive utopian formulation. Just a big "No!" for everything an agile intellect can stigmatize as the cultural fallout of 19th-century economic development in the United States.

Although these leanings wreak their distortions, the core of the book is still arrestingly individual and filled with observations worth thinking about. What Ann Douglas has done is to show an all too holy alliance of ladies and increasingly ladylike Protestant clergymen that gave 19th-century American society the patina of kitschy religiosity 20th-century American society has spent so much energy trying to get rid of.

As she tells the story, it started when the Calvinist ginger went out of religion in the United States in the early part of the 19th century. Cause and effect are hard to disentangle, but Douglas notes that it coincided with the clergy's loss of material power and security through official disestablishment.

Freedom of religion in the young United States meant proliferating sects and competition between religion and irreligion as well as competition between church and church. The clergy was on the defensive, forced to follow popular taste more than command it.

In any situation, the successful leader tends to be the one who finds out what people want to do and tells them to do it. The question is which of many strains of interest and desire a particular leader will connect with—a mysterious equation at best, and always easier to explain after the fact than to predict.

Whatever constellation of forces made it happen that way, it did: Religion lost its virility. The physical frontier of western homesteading and the power frontier of aggressive, individualistic business development drew the masculine element of the society away from the realms of intellect and religion and applied it to the world of action and here-and-now concern with the tangible.

Both the geographical frontier and the economic frontier tended to separate men from women, with the result that the qualities of each became exaggerated by a kind of distillation process. Men in mining camps and offices and clipper ships became rougher and tougher in competitive exercise of the characteristics generally associated with maleness.

The women they dreamed about became, in the yearning reveries of absence, softer, daintier, more tender than real life. The more the men had to suppress the softer side of themselves to make it in situations demanding ever greater toughness from them, the more they projected the suppressed qualities onto women, for both better and worse. It did mean making fun of female timidity and featherheadedness as well as exalting female delicacy of feeling and moral purity.

The women, meanwhile, were doing their version of the same thing. It was an assertion of their individuality as people different from men when they began exaggerating the qualities in themselves that differentiated them from men. It was also as a reinforcement of their ties with men that they went so far to fit their behavior into the men's idealizations.

It could be argued, too, that the frontiers 19th-century Americans were up against made such extreme demands on men's masculine qualities that there was no room in most psyches for anything else. The men, forced to overdevelop their enterprise, courage, ruthlessness, and attention to immediate purpose, had to leave it to the women to present and realize the other side of life and human nature—everything from social manners to artistic embellishments to the spiritual niceties.

Douglas does not say so, but the thought glances off what she does say that the polarization had a lot to do with frontier longings for what might be called simply civilization: a pattern of institutions and physical surroundings to transcend the brute struggle of so much becoming. Men and women alike longed for a milieu of pianos and beautiful clothes, courtesies and elevated sentiments as a counterweight to the callouses on their hands, the mud on their boots, the coarseness of their pleasures, and the cut-throat things they found themselves doing to survive.

Although Prof. Douglas does not go into it, the expanding empire created a version of the same process for the 19th-century British. For them, the new frontier of radically changing economic structures that went with the industrial revolution combined with colonizations and conquests around the world.

A lot about the Victorian era in Victoria's country can be explained in terms of constant confrontations with primitive and/or alien cultures. The experience stiffened British Britishness—remember the jokes about dressing for dinner in the jungle? It bred a horror of "going native." And it made almost intolerable demands on the traits usually associated with maleness. The unending need to maintain postures of fearless leadership and superiority before ill-comprehended and hostile subject peoples was enough to turn the men of Victorian Britain into another kind of caricature of masculinity, with a caricatured femininity as its complement.

At any rate, in both America and Britain, circumstances conspired to make a second-class male of the clergyman. When the sense of miracle and judgment went out of religion, giving way to the rational and pragmatic emphases of science, the most powerfully masculine personalities were no longer attracted to careers in the ministry.

Douglas, who has organized her study around analyses of the careers and personalities of 30 American Protestant ministers and 30 women of the 19th century, shows the pulpit of that time occupied almost exclusively by men of a somewhat feminized type. They tended to be sickly, they had powerful attachments to their mothers, and they felt more than they thought. The intellectual force of the great 17th and 18th-century men of religion was, in 19th-century America, watered down into the frivolous showmanship of a Henry Ward Beecher.

Such men could not compete in macho terms with either the Indian fighters or the robber-baron, business tycoons the 19th-century challenges brought into being among males in the United States. Small wonder they turned to a female constituency to whom they could both appear manly and make the appeals of empathy.

As Douglas points out, the more intelligent and strong among them were unhappy about it. So much so, in Emerson's case, that he left the ministry, saying that, under modern conditions, a clergyman could not be "a man quite whole."

For men of lesser vision and integrity than Emerson's, survival instincts led to a courtship of the ladies that, like any courtship, involved quite a bit of flattery. Exalting women, it exalted motherhood,

---

Anne Crutcher is an editorial writer for the Washington Star.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which, in turn, meant exalting children and domesticity; the gentle, the sweet, the cozy, the dainty, the safe, as opposed to the heroic, adventurous, bloody, and tragic.

Pretty soon, there was a trinity to match, with God turned into a strict but kindly Papa and Jesus into something so close to a pensive girl that there were occasional rebellions against the image—foreshadowings of the Jesus-as-football-player concepts with which early 20th-century evangelicals tried to win back a public sick of spiritual pabulum. To give some idea of how far the 19th-century clergymen went in feminizing Jesus, Douglas quotes Horace Bushnell, a Connecticut Congregationalist, as saying Christ's suffering should be "nothing strange to us" because we see such sacrifice daily in the response of a mother to her child. As Douglas observes, "It is not just that God wants to become man, he wants to become woman."

At a time when childbirth took as many lives as it did in the 19th century, it was a short step from sentimentalizing maternity to sentimentalizing death. And so began the 19th-century cultivation of deathbed scenes which reached its zenith when Harriet Beecher Stowe's Little Eva joined the angels.

It took a woman to get the last celestial teardrop out of the subject.

And, more and more, they came to the fore, as writers whose fiction fleshed out the pronouncements of the ministers. Church was what 19th-century women had instead of universities to explain the world to them. And writing was work that could be done at home, without challenging male dominance of the marketplace. Furthermore, the female writers had a ready-made audience; the girls left at home while their brothers were at Harvard and Bowdoin loved reading. Harriet Beecher Stowe and Louisa Alcott and Sara Josepha Hale just about had to take pen in hand.

It worried the ministers, who felt competition on their own turf. As Douglas points out, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was more a revivalist sermon than anything else. It was not surprising that there should be ministerial murmurings about women writers trying to usurp the pulpit.

Ann Douglas does not examine the way the protean quality of culture in a frontier democracy tended to encourage such enterprise, but her book stimulates thinking about it. It's that kind of book—one to set off chains of speculation and further conclusion as well as to deliver its own messages. Which is to say, it is a book to inspire admiration and gratitude.

If only that were all there is to be said about it!

It is intensely disappointing to find that the brilliant Ann Douglas is also an uncritical transmitter of the most tortuous follies of contemporary thinking about women and society. To make this splendid analysis of an overlooked cultural current and then say it goes to show how capitalism and patriarchy have been in collusion to keep women down—really!

Douglas recognizes how much power women had over the minds and moral values of the community in 19th-century America. She doesn't like what they did with it. What's a feminist to do?

She resorts to Marcusian circularities of determinism. "The cruelest aspect of the process of oppression is the logic by which it forces its objects to be oppressive in turn, to do the dirty work of society in several senses," she says.

The educative role of women as mothers, and as teachers after they came to monopolize American schools, she dismisses by saying "Such an educator provides, no matter how unwillingly, merely window-dressing for the forces that control his society."

In other words, women can't win for winning. The feminist chip is on the anti-capitalist shoulder all the way. Everything the men were doing out on those battle lines of political and economic expansion forced the women to use their leverage to produce mass society, consumerism, imperialism, and the rest.

Prof. Douglas' susceptibility to such dogma would appear to reflect areas of conflict and uncertainty within herself about male and female qualities. She is constantly oscillating between expressions of contempt for the soft and feminine qualities attributed to women and resentment of what are considered male ways and values.

The last part of the book is devoted to two long essays, one on Margaret Fuller and the other on Melville, both of whom Douglas admires as talents running counter to the sentimental religiosity so pervasive in 19th-century American intellectual life. One suspects that she identifies more with Margaret Fuller than with just about anybody else. Certainly one has a sense of the same humorless and professorish quality in each of these strong-minded women.

It is nowhere more perfectly illustrated than in Douglas' failure to get the nuances of the familiar story about Madame de Staël asking Talleyrand if Napoleon was as intelligent as she. "He isn't as brave," said Talleyrand.

The reply took in the fact that Napoleon constantly fled Madame de Staël's presence because he couldn't stand her. It also took in Talleyrand's own well-documented attitude toward Madame de

There is opportunity in America!

Sarkes Tarzian Inc. Bloomington, Indiana

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Staël as a monster of ego drive with a mind more like a battering ram than a rapier. It wasn't the compliment Douglas seems to think it was.

Ironically, she ends up doing less than justice to the richness of Margaret Fuller's consciousness by giving so little evidence of understanding Fuller's feminine yearnings and fulfillments. Similarly, Douglas' failure to say anything about the central strain of homosexuality in Melville's personality and writing suggests serious blind spots about the way masculinity and femininity really manifest themselves in history.

It's too bad. We'd like to believe a woman who can do what Ann Douglas has done in this book can see it all. □

BOOK REVIEW

The Cloud of Danger: Current Realities of American Foreign Policy
George F. Kennan / Little, Brown / $8.95

William Kristol

Three times in *The Cloud of Danger* George Kennan reminds us that the United States has "a commitment to do all in our power...to assure that Israel continues to exist"; each time Kennan is careful to add "the single reservation that it should not involve the dispatch and commitment of American armed forces." Kennan never explains his reasons for this single categorical reservation. Perhaps the explanation lies in his decision that Israel, though a "serious" interest for us, is not a "vital" one. Should we be willing to fight only for our "vital" interests?

But the distinction between "serious" and "vital" interests may not be crucial. We apparently need not be willing and prepared to fight even for our vital interests, at least not against the Soviet Union. "There is no political or ideological difference between the Soviet Union and the United States—nothing which either side would like, or would hope, to achieve at the expense of the other—that would be worth the risks and sacrifices of a military encounter." Because both sides realize or should realize this, "military considerations" are not or need not be "overriding" in Soviet-American relations. This book is intended to refute those politicians and analysts who give excessive weight to military considerations. Indeed, Kennan tells us, "the belief that stronger powers dominate over weaker ones and dictate terms to them simply by the possession of superior military force, or by demands placed under threat of the use of such force, has extremely slender support in historical experience."

But "extremely slender support" is not no support. Kennan knows that peoples can be "destroyed, enslaved, or driven into the sea by hostile" and presumably stronger neighbors. And we have a "commitment not to the Israelis but to ourselves" to see that this does not happen to Israel. Yet this commitment to ourselves can *never* demand "direct military involvement." A "reasonable sense of national dignity," for which Kennan appeals, does not require a reasonable willingness to commit armed forces if necessary to honor our commitments to ourselves.

This is fortunate. For if honoring our commitments required us to consider fighting for them, we should have to take military matters seriously, and this unseemly attention to "military considerations" would "run a strong risk" of causing the very war that we should be concerned to avoid. Kennan's discussion of defense and military issues in this book on "Current Realities of American Foreign Policy" is carried on in the hushed tones that parents once used when discussing family scandals in front of the children. For "above all, the needs of national defense must not be presented to the American public in such a way as to suggest that a military outcome of our differences with the Russians is the most likely one, and military considerations are overriding in Soviet-American relations." Kennan asserts time and again that a concern for "military considerations" is inseparable from, and tantamount to, a conviction that war is inevitable. The American hardliners whose influence Kennan fears believe, according to Kennan, that the Soviets want to "unleash a new world war" or a "major war," or believe at least that "an ultimate showdown on the basis of armed strength" is inevitable.

This is simply false. This unfair and unintelligent caricature of his opponents' views suggests the extent to which Kennan's civility of manner and care in argument, evident where he deals with issues other than defense and Soviet-American relations, fade away as he turns to the "cloud of danger" of nuclear weapons and the "catastrophe we all fear" of a showdown between the U.S. and the USSR. The general argument of those whom Kennan hopes to discredit is of course not that the Soviet Union seeks war or that war is inevitable, but rather that the Soviets believe, not unreasonably, that superior military strength would help them to achieve their objectives without being challenged militarily. This view is never alluded to by Kennan. As he has it, the hardliners believe incorrectly that the Soviet Union maniacally wants war, while he understands correctly that the "weight of defensive considerations in the total pattern of Soviet strategic-political thought" is overwhelming. Kennan writes as if no one has ever made an argument such as the following:

> [The Soviet Union's] political action is a fluid stream which moves constantly, wherever it is permitted to move, toward a given goal. Its main concern is to make sure it has filled every nook and cranny available to it in the basin of world power. But if it finds unassailable barriers in its path, it accepts them philosophically and accomodates itself to them. The main thing is that there should always be pressure, increasing constant pressure, toward the desired goal.

These are of course Kennan's words, from his famous analysis of Soviet conduct published in 1947 in *Foreign Affairs*. Kennan's 1947 understanding of the Soviet leaders—that they will take what they can get, and what they will try to take will in large measure depend on what we allow them to think they can get—has more or less governed American foreign policy for three decades. Kennan does not openly reject that understanding here; he ignores it, presumably to avoid having to confront it. Instead he presents us with a simple choice: "one road leading to a total militarization of policy and an ultimate showdown on the basis of armed strength, the other to an effort to break out of the strait jacket of military rivalry and to strike through to a more constructive and hopeful vision of America's future and the world's." If I am not mistaken, neither the word nor the concept of "containment" appears in Kennan's new book.

Since the concept is not allowed to appear, one cannot say that Kennan explicitly disavows containment. But he does deplore "the madness of universal involvement" of the postwar period, as well as "the extreme militarization of thinking about the Cold War" that followed Korea. And Kennan now stresses the importance of "defensive considerations" for the Soviet Union. The Soviet leaders are far more concerned with "security" than

---

William Kristol is a graduate student in government at Harvard.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"expansion"; they are more concerned with internal problems than external ones. Kennan nowhere considers the possibility that one's sense of security sometimes can be increased by expansion, or that an "unsettling" internal situation can be improved by foreign policy successes.

According to Kennan, even "the traditional Russian tendency to border expansion" is not particularly to be feared. In Asia, for example, "the stalemate in Korea (after 1952) and the anxious vigilance of the Chinese made further expansion impossible except at the risk of a major war." Kennan does not draw the obvious conclusion from this: The primacy of "defensive considerations" in Soviet foreign policy, to the extent such considerations have been primary, has been due in large measure to our ability and readiness to make offensive considerations unattractive to the Soviets. Kennan acknowledges that "the decision to intervene in Korea was a sound one." But today "circumstances are quite different," the area is stable, and Kennan thinks that on balance we are not needed anymore. Kennan refuses to consider to what extent that stability depends on our presence, or on our willingness to step in.

As for the Chinese, the other check on the Soviets in Asia, we are not to do anything to help see to it that they remain a check. Kennan finds it "difficult to say how strongly [he] disapprove[s]" of suggestions that we "make use of the Chinese as an instrument for the advancement of our interests vis-à-vis Russia." Though he cites Russia's need to keep troops on the China border as one factor proving Western fears of Soviet aggression in Europe to be mere "alarmist fantasies," Kennan says that "only from the most simplistic and militaristic of views (only from a view that sees war between the Soviet Union and the United States as virtually inevitable)" can it be argued that "the Chinese-Soviet conflict has benefitted the West in its conflict with the Soviet Union." Kennan's confidence in the predominance of "defensive considerations" in Soviet foreign policy allows him to be harsh on those who endorse such negative policies as playing China off against the Soviet Union, as well as on those who would prefer that we rely on our own arms rather than on Soviet defensiveness. Kennan, by contrast, supports "more positive ways" of improving our relationship with the Soviet Union, an improvement necessary "if the catastrophe we all fear is to be averted and if the great constructive possibilities of the Soviet-American relationship are ultimately to be realized."

Kennan is vague about these possibilities. But the central one presumably coincides with "the main task of American statesmanship with relation to Russia," which is "to reduce the danger posed for both countries and for the world by the present military rivalry." Kennan calls repeatedly in this book as elsewhere for a heightened appreciation by American statesmen of the limits to what we can accomplish in the world. Yet he asks of American statesmen that they reduce the danger not only to America, or even to the world, but to the Soviet Union as well. Apart from the magnitude of this task, and admitting that it is sometimes in America's interests to reduce dangers to the Soviet Union, one cannot but be struck by how wonderfully impartial a prescription this is for American statesmen: They need not put America's interest ahead of the world's or even the Soviet Union's, for the interests of all three fundamentally, and conveniently, coincide.

A specter haunts American liberalism—the specter of military intervention. All the powers of the foreign policy establishment have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this specter. Kennan's attempt at exorcism is unlike that of many others in that he is not a simple proponent of American self-abasement. Thus, Kennan "stands stupefied at the frivolity and irresponsibility reflected" in our response —"or lack of response"—to the Arab oil embargo and price rise; this was "an inexplicable failure of statesmanship," it "defies comprehension." It is "shameful" that the United States "has shown itself incapable of any reaction beyond a pained and helpless wringing of the hands." Kennan is also appalled at the United States' failure "to manifest some sense of its own dignity" in dealing with Third World countries, at our humiliating supplications to Third World dictators for goodwill and forgiveness. Does Kennan find all of this "inexplicable" because he fails to draw any connection between a sense of dignity or self-respect and a willingness to stand up for oneself, which includes the willingness to consider "military considerations"?

According to Kennan, "probably the most important problem of international life in this epoch" is "bringing nuclear weaponry under control." So deep does Kennan bow before this necessity, so convinced is he that nuclear weaponry is out of control, so much does he wish that the "cloud of danger" could be "dissipated," that he succumbs to simple wishful thinking about "the limitations of great-power imperialism" in our age and about the intentions of the Soviet Union, to say nothing of the possible benefits of the SALT negotiations. Kennan's book is written as if we did not have the last three decades as evidence that the possession of nuclear weapons need not lead to their use, that the "arms race" need not careen out of control, that taking "military considerations" into account need not lead to war. Kennan writes as if the only choice we have in foreign policy is one between him and, say, Curtis LeMay. Whatever choice one would have to make in that case, it is not evident that we are forced to such a choice. Though the theory of containment may have had its limitations, and the practice its difficulties, reading this book made me almost nostalgic for a statement like this one, from Kennan's 1947 article:

> [T]he Soviet pressure against the free institutions of the Western world is something that can be contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counter-force at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points, corresponding to the shifts and maneuvers of Soviet policy, but which cannot be charmed and talked out of existence.

Kennan's desperate wish to avert the need for military considerations in American foreign policy leads him to an extraordinary and obdurate refusal to take into account the implications for foreign policy of the differences between the Soviet and American regimes. Though Kennan laments that the character of our politics and the structure of our government make subtle diplomacy impossible and make our foreign policy too susceptible to the pressures of ethnic groups, he sees no real foreign policy implications from the Soviet Union's form of government. In this Kennan follows political scientists who treat the U.S. and the USSR as two "superpowers," fundamentally more alike than different. Paul Warnke reflected this view perfectly in his famous "Apes on a Treadmill" essay, an essay which helped Warnke secure employment from the only one of the two nations too sophisticated to be insulted by being called an ape. Kennan emphasizes, like Warnke, that the U.S. may seem as threatening to the Soviets as they do to us; he does not say that one of those perceptions is more honest or correct than the other. Carrying his assumption of parallelism in the positions of the West and the Soviet Union further, Kennan asserts:

> As things now stand, one must suppose that if any of the Eastern European countries was suddenly to emancipate itself from the Soviet tutelage and to require a new place be found for it in the European scheme of things, the Western NATO powers would be no less appalled by such a development than the leaders of the Soviet Union. They, too, have

Coming
Next Issue:

Elliott Abrams
Nixon's "Agency of Fear"

F.S. Manor
The Irrationality of Separatism

Peregrine Worsthorne
In Defense of Class

Christmas
Book Recommendations

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

committed themselves to the present line of division.

Indeed, the very thought of any sort of removal of the division of Europe is "abhorrent" to the West. According to Kennan, the interests of the West and of the Soviet Union are parallel and complementary. We share an overriding interest in stability: The Soviets do not particularly want Eurocommunists to come to power in Western Europe, we do not want liberal democrats to come to power in Eastern Europe. Kennan apparently does not find such an attitude or policy on our part towards Eastern Europe "shameful."

The Soviet Union and the United States are therefore to be understood as mirror images of each other in international relations, neither more threatening than the other. In fact it seems that our hardliners are more of a threat to peace than is the Soviet Union. If our hardliners were to prevail, they would encourage "competitive military preparations," since they "see some sort of a military showdown as inevitable." This could well lead to war:

> Bismarck, in the final years of his active life, had to contend with just this problem in the tendency of the German military leaders, and many senior political officials in his country, to regard a German-Russian war as inevitable just because the elaborate preparations of the military establishments on both sides of the line made it appear so. In vain, he pleaded with people to understand that Germany had no objectives with regard to Russia that were worth the sacrifices of a war—that war would bring disaster to both parties—such disaster that at the end of it people would no longer even remember the relatively trivial bones of contention out of which it had arisen.
>
> And so it is today. There is no political or ideological difference between the Soviet Union and the United States—nothing which either side would like, or would hope, to achieve at the expense of the other—that would be worth the risks and sacrifices of a military encounter.

Kennan is led to this odd analogy between the United States and Imperial Germany—Scoop Jackson as Kaiser Wilhelm?—by his belief that to be prepared for war is inevitably to invite it, which is why he imputes a belief that war is inevitable to those concerned with "military considerations" today. Kennan sees the years before World War I as the model for our present situation, with the U.S. in the role of Imperial Germany. Kennan is, believe, one of those who has chide American politicians for being obsesse with Munich and for reading the allege lessons of Munich into foreign-polic situations of the past two decades But surely replacing Munich as a guide b the even less analogous circumstances o world politics preceding Sarajevo is no going to help "to get our thinkin straight."

In reading Kennan's book, I was con vinced by his repeated assurances that wa is not the Soviet Union's "favored mean of achieving such of their objectives a seem to be in conflict with those of th United States." But I came increasingly t wonder whether the Soviet Union woul have to fight a war in order to achieve it objectives. As for Kennan's assuranc that those objectives do not "seem to be o such a nature as to challenge any vita interest of ours," I remember that accord ing to Kennan, Israel is not a "vital' interest, and I came to wonder how long w will continue to have the spirit to acknowl edge any vital interests beyond self preservation. □

ON TEN YEARS OF PUBLIC SERVICE

(continued from page 4)

censorship so profound that editors do not realize they practice it. Further, I believe that it is because of this stuffiness that *The Alternative* has been able to acquire a reputation for vigor. We publish material that could be published in no other journal in the country, and we get away with this not only because we are so thoroughly relaxed about opinions at variance with our own, but also because of the singular quality of our readers.

From our correspondence, readers' surveys, and the nature of the responses we get from promotion mailings we do to very diverse mailing lists, we have learned a good deal about our readers. We have an audience unlike any in the country. Simply put, it is at home in the free society. Heterogeneity does not discomfit it. What is more, it is an amazingly self-confident audience. It knows its own prejudices and is agreeable to scrutinizing the prejudices of others. It is not fearful. Some magazines only exist to dispense the sacraments of their quack ideologies. We offer no nostrums and preach no platitudes. Our readers approve.

These past four thousand years of war, tyranny, thuggery, and generalized unpleasantness are not interpreted by us as evidence of impending Utopia, despite the views to the contrary earnestly expressed by so many other intellectual reviews. Our readers share that belief. They seem to appreciate the freedoms we have and the values that have sustained us. Their hope for modest improvement is informed by an apparently invincible grasp on reality. All this makes them a congenial group to write for, but their tolerance for diverse ideas and their appetite for serious thought make them special. Every month their numbers increase. Almost all of them come from other magazines, manifest an impatience with yesterday's orthodoxy, and, it is my belief, constitute a new and rising force in the Republic.

In the years ahead we shall all have much to amuse us. Democracy is making heavy weather of it all over the world, and even in Western Europe the gloomier political gospels are being heard again. Every tin-pot dominion on earth is arming to the teeth and casting a greedy eye on its neighbor's jewelry. At home greed has become an approved motive for all sorts of political artifice. The civil-rights movement, once so admirable and auspicious, has degenerated into a vulgar con job. The so-called women's liberation movement is a mere pretense for self-absorption and almost limitless mischief. Liberalism is the grease paint of the moral buffoon, and conservatism has yet to prove itself compelling. Our opinion molders are bereft of any sensible understanding of sentiment and have lost all confidence in reason. Few respect the fragility of our prosperity and our liberty. The ignoramus has become a culture hero. During such times satire grows problematic. Readers wonder if the satirist is exaggerating or if his profferec absurdity represents conditions as they have evolved.

All this notwithstanding, there is an enormous pleasure to be derived from pondering the present and commenting on the ongoing atrocities. To edit a magazine is to be favored by the spirits of the upper atmosphere. One can say whatever one believes serviceable at the moment, and that kind of freedom is unsurpassingly exhilarating. In the years ahead *The American Spectator* can only improve, for the louts in charge of the national enterprise have assured us that things will only get worse. The management will continue to make improvements. Better writers are appearing all the time. Better targets are a certitude. Indubitably, we shall have our pratfalls, but the *gluteus maximus* is sufficient to the peril. It is our promise to our readers that *The American Spectator* will continue to inform them of the true proportions of every issue and of the absurdity of every national messiah. That is my money-back guarantee and my aspiration. Now, ladies and gentlemen, if you will excuse me, I need another drink. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOK REVIEW

Defending America: Towards a New Role in the Post-Detente World
Robert Conquest, et al. / Basic Books / $13.95

Stephen Rosen

John Wheeler-Bennett tells a story about two workers in Weimar Germany. One had a pregnant wife, but not enough money to buy a baby carriage. "Don't worry," the other man said, "I work in a baby-carriage factory. I'll smuggle out the parts, you assemble them, and you'll have your baby carriage." He kept his promise, but a few days later, the first man came back to complain. "I've put that damn thing together three different times and each time it comes out a machine gun."

Defending America is a very emphatic book. It is a collection of essays about Soviet foreign, military, and domestic policies which, when put together, are intended to leave in the reader's mind the image of a Soviet machine gun pointed in the general direction of the West. They make short work of those who would argue that we are dealing with only a misassembled baby carriage.

For example, a favorite argument of the advocates of a less suspicious stance towards the Soviet Union is that both sides have engaged in an unnecessary competition in nuclear armaments. This has achieved nothing, and was the result of mindless reactions to increases in the weaponry of the opposing side. Even worse, it has usually been the United States that has initiated these competitions, forcing the Soviet Union to build in order to catch up. The United States could stop this race if it would by restraining or halting the acquisition and improvement of our weapons. The Soviet Union, reassured of our good intentions, could then halt its own weapons programs, and the senseless race would come to an end. This is, in brief, the "Apes on a Treadmill" thesis advanced by Paul Warnke, who is now the Director of the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and the chief negotiator at SALT.

Albert Wohlstetter's essay in this book nicely demolishes the Warnke thesis. His position is simple. In 1952 the United States spent, in constant 1976 dollars, $32.6 billion on strategic offensive weapons. In 1976 we spent $7.7 billion. During the same period, the United States radically decreased the total megatonnage of the nuclear weapons we could deliver to the Soviet Union. Wohlstetter could have mentioned the grosser fact that the United States stopped building ICBM silos in 1967 and missile-launching submarines shortly thereafter. Nor did we resume construction when the Soviet Union surpassed us numerically in these areas in 1971. He also could have mentioned that in the 20 years during which the United States enjoyed massive nuclear superiority, we very consciously refrained from exploiting that superiority in order to obtain concessions from the Soviet Union and its allies. This is not to say that we did not take steps and build weapons that threatened the Soviet Union: Only something resembling complete disarmament could have avoided doing that. It is to suggest that the United States did take several initiatives to demonstrate to the Soviet Union that we were interested in getting off the treadmill. If ending that competition were merely a matter of showing the Soviets a willingness to restrain ourselves, they might have reciprocated. Instead, they steadily increased their defense budgets and procurement of nuclear weapons, continuing, for example, to build submarine-launched ballistic missiles all through the five years after the signing of the Interim Accord limiting offensive weapons in 1972. This was perfectly legal, but it hardly indicates that the Soviet Union was seeking only parity, since it had achieved numerical *superiority* in ICBMs and submarine-launched ballistic missiles in 1972. And it cannot be claimed that the Soviets were building subs in response to American construction, since there was none. All this gives some substance to Herman Kahn's jibe that what was wrong with the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency was that it was called the *United States* Arms Control and Disarmament Agency: The people who worked there looked at the name and thought that their job was to disarm the United States. If it had been called the *Soviet* Arms Control Agency, they would have paid more attention to controlling the Soviet Union.

A different argument presented by advocates of kindlier relations with the Soviet Union suggests that the Soviet actions that we find so obnoxious are the result of demands made by the Soviet military, which lobbies for its pet projects the same way the Pentagon does. Therefore, the United States should act moderately in order to strengthen the hand of the liberals in the Kremlin who must defend the goal of domestic economic growth against Russian hardliners. Several essays in this book address this question indirectly. Their theme is also simple: One cannot argue about Soviet analogues to the Pentagon because the Soviet Union is not like the United States. Gregory Grossman's article, "The Economics of Detente," demonstrates with official Soviet figures that the Soviet Union is, at bottom, a poor country, short of labor and capital. The 1976-1980 Five Year Plan calls for a 26 percent increase in the level of gross investment over the next five years. The two previous Plans had called for 43 and 42 percent increases. At the same time, the share of the gross national product devoted to military expenses has increased to 11-12 percent. Leonard Schapiro notes in his essay that the plans for economic decentralization that had started so boldly in 1965 were soon withdrawn, and were formally killed in 1971 at the Twenty-fourth Party Congress.

What can we infer from this? First, the decision to spend one-eighth of the GNP on guns was a conscious sacrifice. That was money which was not going to be available for other tasks that were quite important—industrial investment—and which was not allocated by a decentralized bureaucracy. The Presidium placed immediate military strength ahead of maintaining the old rates of economic growth. Perhaps it values power a great deal. Perhaps the partisans of the military have great influence within the highest levels of Soviet government. It does not matter much which is so. As Harrison Salisbury said of an earlier generation of Russian leaders, either they cannot control their generals or they will not; it is bad both ways. Second, we can reasonably understand the Soviet push for better economic relations with the West as an attempt to get the capital and labor-saving technology which would permit the Soviet Union to strengthen its economy while continuing to give military spending first priority. In this regard, it is useful to note, as Grossman does, that Soviet trade with the West has been directed toward achieving autarky rather than interdependence. Factories rather than industrial imports have been purchased in order to decrease Soviet dependence on the West.

Finally, it is heard that the Soviet Union is evolving into a more moderate, if not liberal, regime, but that unfriendly American actions will be used by the oligarchs to justify their retention of dictatorial powers. One wonders. Political evolution must be based on a historical memory, a consciousness of the consequences of past decisions. Robert Conquest, the greatest Western scholar of the Stalin era, makes what is probably the most unsettling revelation of all when he writes that, officially, that memory does not exist in the Soviet Union:

> [N]o account, true or false, is now available about the Stalin terror, which was the vastest and most determining event to have molded the country in modern times. The political struggle, the great trials, the enormous death rolls, the

(*continued on page 47*)

Stephen Rosen is a graduate student in government at Harvard.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CURRENT WISDOM

The Daily Californian

Advanced literary experiments heaved up by the nascent Hemingways at work on the editorial pages of the illustrious *Daily Californian*, newspaper of the University of California at Berkeley:

We have asked a random sample of Cal students—picked from among the staff writers of The Daily Californian—to record their memories of the first time they had sex.

The names have been changed to protect the innocent, and the not so innocent.

Darleen

It was two summers after the Summer of Love. I was 19 and bored. It seemed I had always been bored. I was living with my boring parents, working at a boring clerical job, keeping desultory company with my boring friends from high school. I awoke each day at 6:15 a.m., got dressed, ate breakfast, and went to work in the thickening LA smog.

He at least was not boring, although he worked at the same place I did. He was an engineer—hardly thrilling—but he was Chicano (the only Chicano engineer there, and faintly exotic) and he confessed to me that he really wanted to be a writer. Salsa and sensitivity. He was also 25 and authentically cynical, unlike those college boys I'd known who affected cynicism in order not to appear naive.

Eventually, inevitably, we had our first real date. We were supposed to go to a movie, but the ticket line was too long, so we went back to his place and smoked dope and drank Liebfraumilch. I'd never before drunk anything but Red Mountain and Manischewitz. As a matter of fact, I'd never before been in a single man's apartment, alone. (Perhaps that explains why I'd been so bored.) He kissed superbly. I supposed I was seduced. He put on an Erik Satie record and took me to bed. I told him I was a virgin, trying not to sound coy. He was amused, paternal, knowing. He had condoms. I was amazed and relieved.

[*February 25, 1977*]

Commonweal

During a puckish review of *The Taster's Guide to Beer*, *Commonweal*'s associate editor, Mr. Raymond A. Schroth, offers reassurance to his readers of his fundamental commitment to high seriousness:

I won't buy the highly-touted Coors because I don't want my beer money supporting Coors family right-wing causes.

[*September 16, 1977*]

The Greensboro [N.C.] Daily News

The sobering declamations of a thoughtful and courageous woman who in a saner world would doubtless head the National Endowment for the Humanities:

ALDERSON, W. Va. (AP)—Sara Jane Moore, convicted of trying to kill President Gerald Ford, claims she has been returned to her native state and a federal women's prison as a political prisoner.

"Of course it's safe to say if it weren't for my politics I wouldn't be here now," said the newest resident of the Federal Reformatory for Women.

"I think it's also safe to say I'm a student of Marxism and a socialist. Those are fog words that people immediately react to without understanding."

[*July 20, 1977*]

Mother Jones

M. Jean De Savieu proudly relates his achievements and his insights to kindred spirits, manfully struggling against the terrors of the Mainstream:

Dear Mother:

I am an inmate in Statesville prison. I have been incarcerated for five years on a seven- to 12-year sentence for an armed robbery of the largest retail bookstore in Chicago on Christmas Eve. All I could carry was $43,000 of their money.

I first got *Mother Jones* a few weeks ago from a brother who had gotten it from the library cart. He thought I would like to read your magazine because I am always saying that 90 per cent of books are written to make money (capitalism) and not to inform anyone.

However, I find *Mother Jones* to be relevant to surviving in the mainstream of American life. Y'all doing all right. Nonetheless, y'all still a bunch of white boys trying to clean up y'all's daddies' s--t!

Jean De Savieu
Joliet, IL

[*July 1977*]

Congressional Record

Another emotional moment on the floor of the United States House of Representatives, provided by the Rt. Hon. Richard Ottinger, Conscience of the House:

Mr. Speaker, it is nearly 30 years since the playwright Arthur Miller first shocked the American people with his "Death of a Salesman," a grim portrayal of the grueling life of a sales representative. Since that time, few advances have been made to improve the rights and working conditions of these important contributors to the American economy. They are in limbo between the powerful organizations of both labor and management. The salesman is not eligible for union membership; he has gained neither workmen's compensation nor unemployment insurance. The Willy Lomans of the United States still look to the Congress for the equitable working conditions they deserve. On their behalf, I urge my colleagues to lend their support to the Sales Representatives Protection Act.

[*March 30, 1977*]

WomaNews

Ms. Flash Silvermoon lucubrating contagiously on the Church News page of *WomaNews*, the feminist paper from Gainesville, Florida:

As feminists, many of us have begun to unravel our way out of the man's web by rejecting his various priests and organized forms of male religions. But in the process, some of us have also rejected our own Spirituality; this is perhaps the greatest crime of all. They stole our religious concepts, gave them mastectomies, and tried to shove it back down our throats in a cellophane package complete with original sin and a one way ticket to hell if we didn't comply. Being women, we were in league with the devil anyway and have no souls to save.

....If you have succeeded in rejecting male religions, the next step, or perhaps it is the first step, is to bounce that god off his cloud. Male god-heads are a product of and breed self-hate in women. A spiritual gestapo can only create a fascist planet.

[*January 1977*]

The Progressive

The simple wisdom of an astonished reader of *The Progressive* displayed in the correspondence section of that great organ of enlightened opinion:

I was astonished to read your statement in the April issue Comment, "President Carter deserves praise for his recent assertion that the United States 'will not back down' in its criticism of human rights violations in the Soviet Union and other nations of the Soviet bloc."

Pravda has warned: "Detente and the normal conduct of talks presuppose the establishment of trust between the negotiating parties and respect for the laws and traditions of each other, while attempts to exert pressure on us and to bargain for concessions of principles are bringing about an atmosphere of distrust."

I voted for President Carter, but I'm sure he is wrong in giving priority to Soviet dissidents rather than to detente and disarmament. Many thousands of our American dissidents in Canada and Sweden are not even free to come into the United States to visit their parents. And the conditions in which many of our more than 200,000 prisoners live are shocking.

President Carter's present priority on Soviet civil rights suggests to me that he has not learned much from Korea and Indochina. But he is capable, extremely intelligent—and he is listening. Let us express ourselves to him.

Alice Franklin Bryant, Seattle, Washington

[*June 1977*]

The New York Review of Books

From the salon intellectuals, still more scowls:

[T]he protests of the Sixties...did not cut deep enough: the major problems of the Fifties are still with us, and the Sixties' zeal for betterment has gone the way of all flesh, having dwindled into the activities of sober Naderites, ecologists, and careful lawyers. With the war over, the draft repealed, circumstances straitened, and lots of blacks in television commercials, most of the young have given up radical politics; they may be more pessimistic and skeptical than the young of the Fifties, but they are not much more politically inclined. If social improvement and political overhaul depend on rousing the young against the old, then we are surely lost. The cities are dying, the air and water are filthy, the corporations ride the economy, and we are no further from nuclear annihilation than we ever were.

[*August 4, 1977*]

Forbes

The charm of an American business genius, displayed by Mr. Paul Charlap, chairman of Savin Business Machines Corp., in an interview for a leading business publication:

"You don't smoke, do you?" Charlap barks at his visitor. "I don't allow smoking in my house. Even my mother must smoke outside in the garden." Charlap doesn't drink liquor, either. At 52, small, bald and trim, he glows with physical fitness—testimony to daily, hour-long workouts in his basement gym. Then, as if he's explaining everything, Charlap says, "See those skateboards? They're mine, not my grandson's. I'm not the passive type. I have a tremendous energy level. I want to build a great, big company full of people with smiling faces."

[*September 1, 1977*]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOK REVIEW
(continued from page 45)

archipelago of camps have simply disappeared from the public prints. The period is filled with industrial construction. The only explanation for this is that the leaders are psychologically unable to countenance truth, or to abandon the idea that the past is freely to be manipulated at their behest.

Unofficial memories must exist, although what one reads about young Germans' memories of Hitler gives some indication of what a puny political force private recollection may be.

For all this it would be incorrect to assume that the dominant impression that will be left with the readers of this book will be one of a machine gun uncovered. After all, we knew most of what this book could tell us all along. It is all in the newspapers and the public record. We just forgot, although to put it as flatly as that does not do justice to the energy and activity that must have gone into forgetting facts of this size. Two examples. Before Jimmy Carter advanced his proposals for deep cuts in the offensive forces of both sides in Moscow this year, the perennial cry of the left, and of Paul Warnke, was that the 1972 SALT agreement was worse than no agreement at all, that it did not reduce force levels but did increase the pressures for qualitative improvements. What was really needed was a big reduction in the nuclear arsenals of the superpowers. Many of those same people now condemn the Carter proposals as rash and unfair to the Soviet Union, and there are very few people around to remind them of what they were saying two or three years ago.

After Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn emerged from the Soviet Union, both the gloomiest conservatives and the happiest liberals hoped for a regeneration of the moral strength of the West through his inspiration. Solzhenitsyn is all but forgotten now. In retrospect, the Soviet danger of which he warned appears to have existed in the public mind only as one in a succession of fashionable terrors that tingled peoples' spines. It was something to worry about after endangered species had become boring, but before we discovered the depletion of the ozone layer.

People do not like to remember uncomfortable facts, and this book, if it is read, will not be remembered. It is itself only a reminder of what we know already, and like most reminders, it will strike us as being tiresome and petty. The relentless and apodictic air of most of the essays will not help matters much. It is likely, therefore, that this book will earn only curt dismissals as "one more tirade on the Red menace."

But it should be read. And reread. □

Changing Your Address?

Please attach the address label from the *most recent* issue of your American Spectator in the space below. Print your new address and mail this form to The American Spectator. When writing to us about your subscription, always attach your address label or print your name and address exactly as they appear on your address label. Be sure to include the line of information above your name.

Important: allow six weeks for address change.

THE AMERICAN SPECTATOR
Circulation Department
P.O. Box 877
Bloomington, Indiana 47401

(Please attach address label here.)

☐ Please renew my subscription for one year. Enclosed is my check for $10.00 X71

(please print)

Name .....
Address .....
City .....
State ..... Zip .....
Date of change .....

classified

HELP WANTED

A new, aggressive publishing firm with an established back list is seeking a young person with selling experience to supervise sales and promotion. Write to: Gateway Editions, Ltd., 620 West Washington Street, South Bend, Indiana 46625.

The American Spectator is looking for a circulation manager. Job involves bookkeeping, answering subscription correspondence, and filing. Must type 50 wpm or better. An ideal job for a recent graduate. Send resumé or write for application: Personnel Department, The American Spectator, P.O. Box 877, Bloomington, IN 47401. 812-334-2715.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS

BOOK AUTHORS!

Join our successful authors in a complete, reliable publishing program; publicity, advertising, handsome books. Send for FREE report on your manuscript and *Publish Your Book*.
CARLTON PRESS Dept. ALT
84 Fifth Ave., New York, 10011

FREE

Directory of Conservative and Libertarian Serials, Publishers, and Free-lance Markets. Send $3.50. Dennis D. Murphy, 3404 North Romero Road, Box B1, Tucson, Arizona 85705.

I shall pay cash money for a usable copy of *Essays from the Rambler, Adventurer, and Idler,* edited by W.J. Bate and published by Yale University Press. Address all responses to The American Spectator, Box T.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS

SURVIVAL RIGHTS, The Journal of Environmental Debate. Current issue contains articles on Robert F. Kennedy, Super-Phenix, Carter, and David Rockefeller. Also book and film reviews. Published bi-monthly. Annual subscription $4.00. Write to SURVIVAL RIGHTS, Box 3685, Seattle, Wash. 98124, or call toll-free nationwide 1-800-824-5136 and ask for Operator 40E. In California, call 1-800-852-7631 and ask for Operator 40F.

MISCELLANEOUS

VINYL BUMPER STICKERS: "Government is *Not* the Solution—It's the Problem" & "Warning—I Don't Brake for Politicians or Bureaucrats." $1.00 each. Simon Jester, Dept. A, P.O.B. 514, Beaverton, OR 97005.

TEE/SHIRTS AND SWEAT/SHIRTS: Milton Friedman, Ronald Reagan, Adam Smith, and Saint Thomas Aquinas. Two sizes fit all normal people: Large and Too Large. Tees $6 each and Sweats $8 each postpaid. H.L. Mencken, Edmund Burke, and Russell Kirk available Tees only. Satisfaction Guaranteed. The Commodore, POB 277, North Adams, Mich. 48262.

BRAND NEW from The Saturday Evening Club. American Spectator Turkey Tee Shirts. Be among the first to order this spiffy new item, which is destined to become a trend-setter. Money-back guarantee: Return in 10 days if not satisfied. To order yours, send $6.00 per shirt (3 for $15) to: Baron Von Kannon, P.O. Box 877, Bloomington, Indiana 47401. Please specify size: Large or Extra Large; make checks payable to The Saturday Evening Club.

MISCELLANEOUS

YOUR NATAL HOROSCOPE $5. Send date, time, and birthplace to Phoebus, Box 4192A, Santa Barbara, CA 93103.

KEEP OUR CANAL! vinyl bumper stickers. 1/$1, 7/$5. Andrew Cseplo, P.O. Box 54, Catlett, VA 22019.

The United States Industrial Council Educational Foundation publishes a variety of essays and reports on economic and national issues. Booklets by Peter J. Rusthoven, Philip Vander Elst, W.E. Cage, Anthony Harrigan, and other authors. For information on publications available, write: USIC Educational Foundation, P.O. Box 2686, Nashville, Tenn. 37219.

AUTUMNAL APPAREL: American Spectator Turkey Jackets! Full-cut coach's jackets featuring nylon, buttons, pockets, collar, and drawstring. Navy blue with our famous turkey logo. $12 each, three for $30. Money-back guarantee: Return in 10 days if not satisfied. Specify Large or Extra Large. Make checks payable to: The Saturday Evening Club, P.O. Box 877, Bloomington, Indiana 47401.

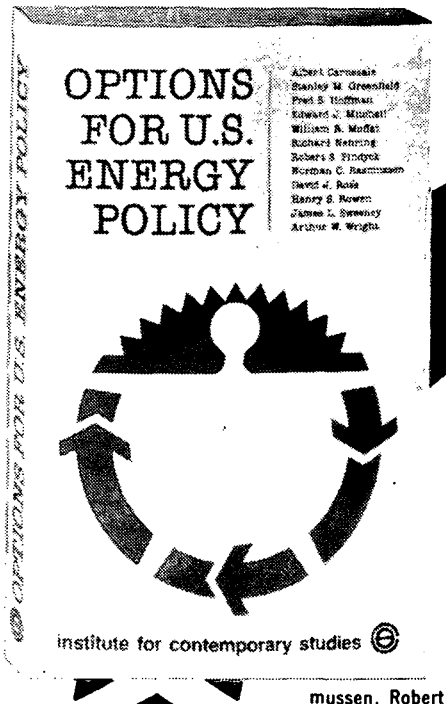
REACH 45,000 READERS
with an American Spectator classified advertisement

25 cents a word. 12-word minimum. Box numbers $2 each. The American Spectator reserves the right to reject any copy for any reason. Please specify ad classification: Help Wanted, Positions Wanted, Books & Periodicals, Literary, Conferences, Personal, Miscellaneous. Send advertisements with full payment to: Classified Ad Department, The American Spectator, P.O. Box 877, Bloomington, Indiana, 47401.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a reasonable alternative...

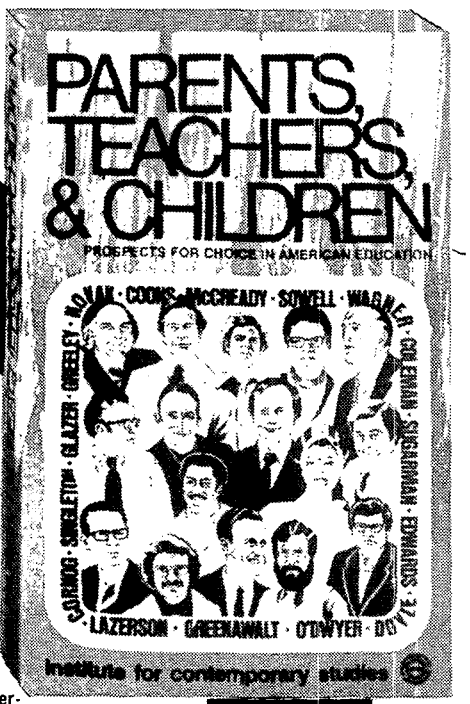
to government policy, both past and present, is offered in these books just published by the Institute of Contemporary Studies. Diverse authors offer their solutions to problems in energy, education, social security, and foreign policy.



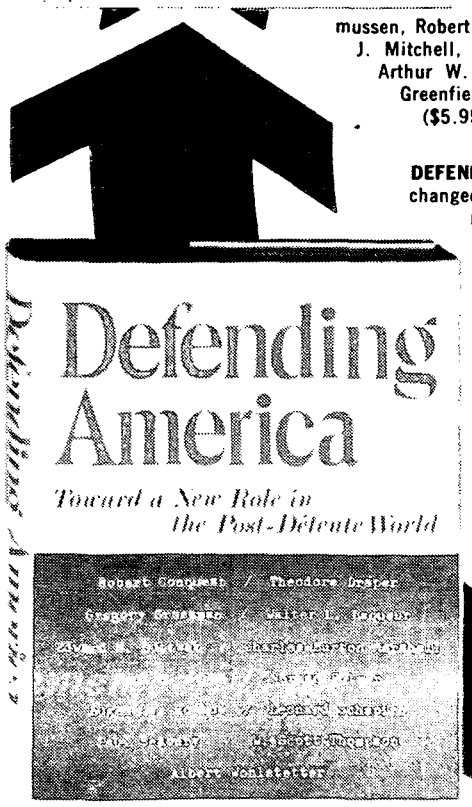
1

OPTIONS FOR U.S. ENERGY POLICY is a collection of essays by prominent economists and scientists, which presents a coherent alternative strategy to the Carter proposals on national energy policy. The authors argue that successful policy requires solving immediate problems — of national security, public health and safety — and relying on the adaptive capability of energy markets to solve long run problems. Authors are: Henry Rowen, Norman Rasmussen, Robert Pindyck, James L. Sweeney, Edward J. Mitchell, Fred S. Hoffman, William Moffat, Arthur W. Wright, Albert Carnesale, Stanley Greenfield, David Rose, and Richard Nehring. ($5.95 softbound).

2


PARENTS, TEACHERS, & CHILDREN
PROSPECTS FOR CHOICE IN AMERICAN EDUCATION
COONS · SUGARMAN · EDWARDS · CORNOG · DOYLE · GLAZER · GREELEY · NOVAK · McCREADY · SOWELL · WAGNER · COLEMAN · SINGLETON · LAZERSON · GREENAWALT · O'DWYER
Institute for contemporary studies

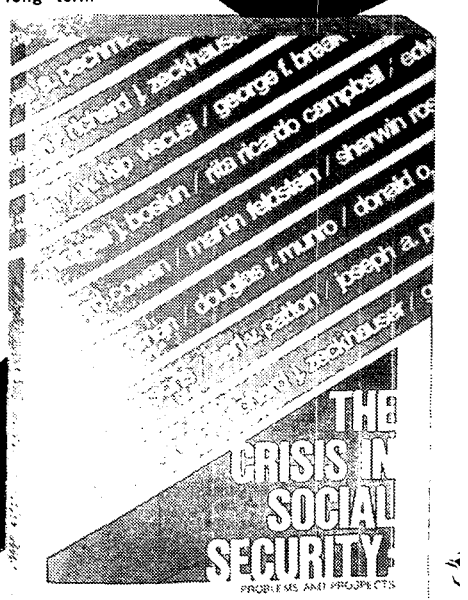
PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND CHILDREN analyzes the present state of education and considers mechanisms for increasing educational choice including vouchers and entitlements. Apart from educational benefits, the authors conclude that expanding choice would encourage cultural pluralism and social trust. Authors are: James S. Coleman, Nathan Glazer, Thomas Sowell, Michael Novak, Andrew Greeley, John E. Coons, R. Kent Greenawalt, E. Babette Edwards, William H. Cornog, Denis P. Doyle, Marvin Lazerson, Richard E. Wagner, William McCready, Robert Singleton, Stephen D. Sugarman, and John P. O'Dwyer. ($5.95 softbound).



3

DEFENDING AMERICA looks at America's changed position in the world since Vietnam in terms of political, economic, military and spiritual implications of detente, concluding that the Soviet Union has benefited enormously, while the U.S. has fallen behind in military strength and in power to take new political initiatives. Authors are: James R. Schlesinger, Walter Z. Laqueur, Paul Seabury, Eugene V. Rostow, Paul H. Nitze, Robert Conquest, Leonard Schapiro, Theodore Draper, W. Scott Thompson, Gregory Grossman, Charles Burton Marshall, Albert Wohlstetter, Edward N. Luttwak, and Norman Polmar. ($13.95 hardbound).

4



THE CRISIS IN SOCIAL SECURITY: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS examines the major economic and political ramifications of the long term funding crisis, the effects on the overall economy, and the necessity for reform. Authors are: Milton Friedman, Martin Feldstein, Michael J. Boskin, Rita Ricardo Campbell, Joseph Pechman, Richard J. Zeckhauser, George F. Break, Edward Cowan, Douglas R. Munro, Donald O. Parsons, Carl V. Patton, Sherwin Rosen, and W. Kip Viscusi. ($5.95 softbound).

☐ (Please Bill Me)

Please send me_____copies of the ICS books on energy_____#1, education_____#2, social security_____#4, foreign policy_____#3, for a total cost of $_____(prices include postage and handling). Make check/money order payable to:

Name_____

Address_____

City, State, Zip_____

☐ Send me a catalogue of all ICS books.

☐ Please add me to your mailing list.

Institute for Contemporary Studies
260 California Street • AL-1
San Francisco, California 94111

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED